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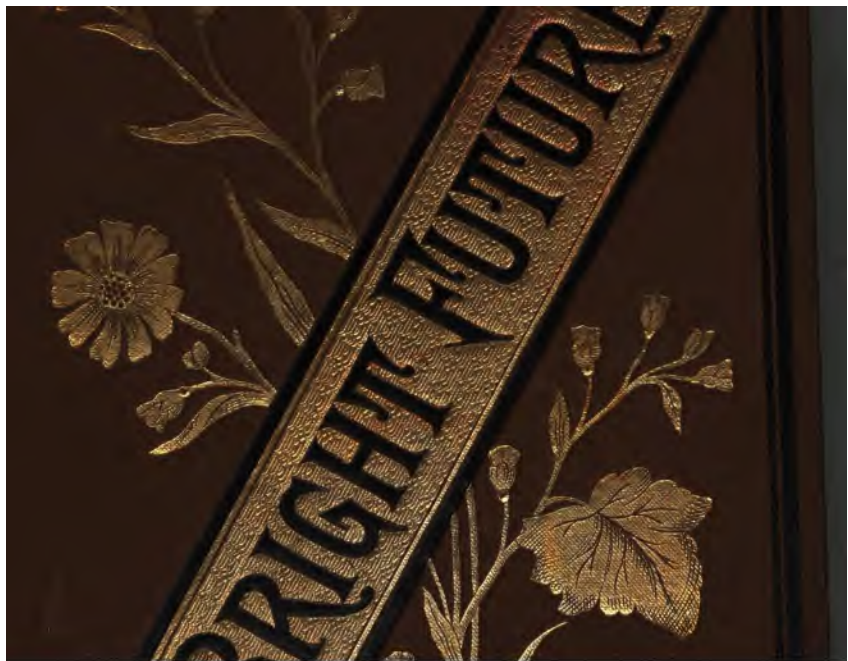
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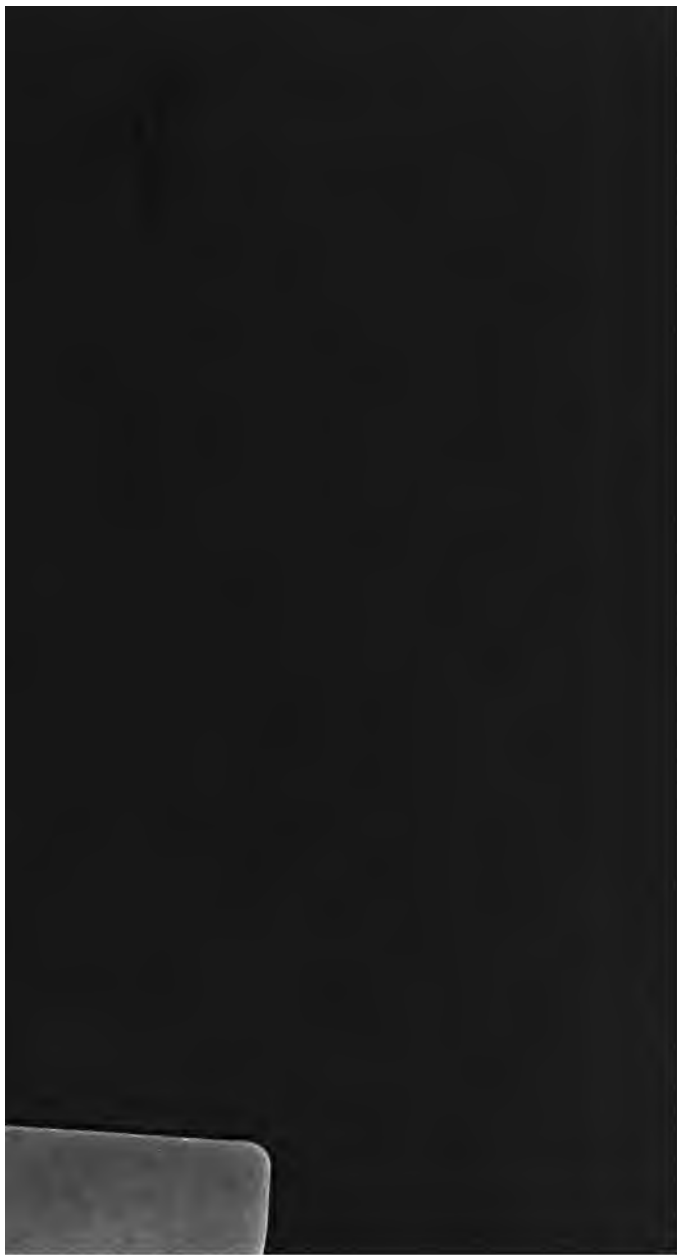
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HER BRIGHT FUTURE.

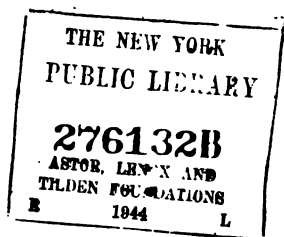
"Dear love," said he, "the world is wide,
But howsoever wide it be
It hath no land nor sea
To sunder thee and me."

THEODORE TILTON.



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1880.



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HER BRIGHT FUTURE.

CHAPTER I.

KATHERINE.

"Full yellow lies the harvest field,
Adown the broad hillside."

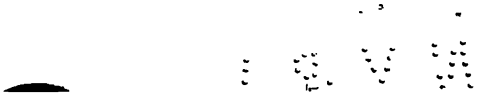
A wide field, crowned with waving grain rapidly falling before the exertions of a band of tired harvesters.

Two children, a slender dark-eyed girl, and a boy, stand near the edge of the field watching, with eager eyes, the movements of a self-raking reaper. Half fascinated, and a little frightened, they press back and away, as it comes around and passes them — the sharp sickle gleaming in the sun, the long arms of the rake, like those of an industrious giant, gathering the fallen grain and leaving it in long, straight rows of gavels, ready for the binders. They press close behind the reaper, for the field is wide, and there are dark clouds in the west, though overhead the sun is blazing in almost tropical splendor.

The harvesters make a motley crowd, being representatives from many climes. "Jim," Mr. Seymour's hired man is driving the reaper. He is captain of the band—a stalwart "Hoosier," six feet in height, with a broad face beaming with good-humor under his torn straw hat.

The inevitable "son of Erin" is here, and a rollicking, muscular fellow he is, leading the binders, and only pausing for an occasional pull at the brown jug which stands in a shady fence corner. Its contents are not strong, being only water sweetened with molasses, and flavored with plenty of ginger; but Patrick Kernon takes a long draught and winks roguishly over his shoulder to his comrades, as if it was the strongest whisky ever distilled.

Close behind Patrick come two voluntary exiles from "fair France." Nicholas Goddrice is a slim, picturesque youth, with melancholy, southern eyes, and clear dark skin. He would make a handsome brigand, but his tastes are quiet and peaceable. Hypolite Antione is a different type of French peasantry, a great hulking fellow, with dangerously low forehead, and little, restless eyes, with the expression of a wild beast in them.



Coarse-minded and brutal, he is not pleasant to look at — is even repulsive.

That slow, conscientious worker is Steinburg, Mr. Seymour's German tenant; and the man in heavy, blue woolen clothes, who works beside him, is Eric Olafson, lately arrived from Norway. His large blue eyes have a bewildered expression; he has evidently not yet grown accustomed to our hurrying American ways.

The remaining man, wearing the ruffled calico shirt, with sleeves rolled above the elbow and held in place by pink elastics, is a Yankee, as one can see at a glance. He and Jim are rivals for the favor of Lyddy, the "maid of all work" at the brown farm-house. She is coming down the path through the orchard now, a blue gingham sun-bonnet pushed back from her comely face, and a large basket on her plump arm. The men stop work as she comes into the field, and gather around the lunch-basket. Katherine and Tom come with the men, and Lyddy takes them under her care most affectionately.

An odd, interesting face is Katherine's — not exactly pretty, it is not nearly blooming enough for that; but full of promise in her

dawning womanhood ; a sweet oval face, with only the faintest tinge of color in the cheeks ; but it will never be called cold, with those starry, eloquent eyes ; and the long lashes are black as midnight.

She looks anxious and troubled to-day.

“ Oh, Lyddy ! has mother awakened yet ? ” she asks earnestly. “ I smoothed her forehead and bathed her head with camphor till she fell asleep. Then I came down here with Tom, for he wanted me to see how well the new reaper worked. ”

“ Jest you rest easy about your poor ma, Miss Kathie, ” answers Lyddy, “ for she was sleeping like a baby the last I knowed about it. ”

“ But she may awake and want me, Lyddy ; so I think I had better return to the house, ” says the young girl, gravely ; and she walks sedately up the orchard path to the house.

Jim has finished eating, and is carefully examining the reaper before commencing work again.

“ Tom, ” he calls to the lad who is standing at a little distance, “ you jest run up to the house, and fetch me the wrench that hangs in the woodshed. This gearing is out of fix, somehow ; and, say ! tell your pa to come down. ” Then turning

to the men: "I'm afeard I've melted a box, and, if I have, why, we can't work any more to-night. I don't like the looks of them thunder-heads in the west, either. We'd best shock up what we've got down, for it looks to me ez if we was in for a bad night; and mebbly a wet day to-morrow."

Mr. Seymour has strolled leisurely down to the field, and now takes in the situation at a glance.

"Well, Jim, have you broken the reaper already? What is the trouble, anyhow?" he asks.

"Oh, nothin'," growls Jim, mournfully; "there's a box melted, that's all, and somebody's got to go to Elgin and git it fixed, and it's goin' to rain pitchforks in less than three hours time."

"Well, well, my man! make the best of it," says Mr. Seymour soothingly, not much disturbed by the accident. "I will go to Elgin to-morrow, myself."

Jim makes no response to this offer, but his honest face clouds over as he walks to where the horses are patiently standing, and gives "old Bay's" bridle a jerk, which is entirely uncalled for.

"Yes!" he says between his teeth, "*You'll* go, I'll bet you will, and we shan't ketch sight of you

agin for *one* three days, neither, and right in the middle of harvestin', too."

Mr. Seymour walks back to the house with more alacrity than he has shown for weeks, and prepares to leave home.

"Jim, is father going to Elgin? I do hope he won't go. Can't you stop him, Jim?" asks Tom, a tremble of anxiety in his voice, young though he is.

"Stop him! Tom, the devil can't stop your father when he gits one of them wild hankerin' spells on him, and this broken reaper gives him jest the excuse he wants," says Jim.

The boy looks very sad.

"Never you mind, Tom! You ain't to blame. No more am I; only mind you don't foller in his steps when you grow up, and so break your mother's heart entirely."

"There's no danger of that, Jim," the boy answers quietly. He is only a child in years, yet, as he says this, his face looks curiously manly and determined. These young Seymours are strange, precocious children. The lonely life of a prairie farm has helped to make them unlike most children of their age. But the shadow which darkens their childhood, making them anxious and

wise beyond their years, is their father's intemperance. Every thing about the place shows the neglect of the master; from the tumble-down fence which separates the western fields and the highway, to the brown farm-house, standing in the center of Mr. Seymour's fair, broad acres, and full a mile from the nearest neighbors.

Through a wilderness of trees, an avenue, half a mile in length, leads from highway to house. In midsummer the air is heavy with fragrance from the drooping white blossoms of the locust trees. There is a wild beauty about the avenue these Summer nights, when a full moon is in the wide heavens, and the wind blows fresh from the south, spicy with the scent of pennyroyal and sweet wild herbs.

Katherine used to wander there alone in the twilight, listening to the twitter of sleepy birds, and nursing her odd, poetic fancies. She was a strange child, given to day-dreams. Flowers, to her, had expression, even as faces have. Daisies looked full of innocent surprise, while creamy June roses were so heavy with love and languor that they drooped; tiger-lilies were warm-hearted things, though always jealous.

Woman and poet, her life could not fail to be one of suffering; as yet, she did not know much of life, but was as pure as the flowers she loved so well. Her mother was a refined New England lady; and, when failure in business caused Mr. Seymour to seek this wild, western farm, she bore her trials bravely, and solaced herself educating her children. They were usually very happy, though for the past four years Mr. Seymour's habits of intemperance had increased, and this was why so slight a thing as a reaper out of repair brought a cloud over the entire family — the invalid wife, Katherine, Tom, and even Jim and Lyddy, the faithful servants.

Mr. Seymour went to Elgin, and, as Jim had predicted, did not return for three days. Meanwhile the laborers were idle. The anxious wife grew daily weaker; Katherine tried hard to seem cheerful, but cried herself to sleep each night, thinking of her mother's death-stricken face.

Oh, what a dark cloud it was!

CHAPTER II.

A NOBLE SOUL.

"The parting of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes."

Walter, the eldest son, had been with them in former years,—a brave, helpful youth, tenderly devoted to his mother, a comforter and friend to the younger children.

The year that he died was a memorable one to Katherine; from his death dates the dawn of her womanhood. She had been a dreamy, care-free child, but all the latent strength of her earnest character came to the surface in time of trial; after his death she was friend, companion and comforter to the gentle mother she loved so passionately. From that time she cast aside childish things, and bore her share of life's responsibilities bravely.

Walter had worked very hard all Summer, exposure and severe labor had weakened his undeveloped frame, and he had been very

ill with malarial fever ; but youth and his mother's good care were bringing him safely through.

He was sitting up one night, for the first time in weeks, and was looking at his absent sister's photograph ; he seemed too languid to express any enthusiasm, although it was an admirable likeness of her.

"I think I will go back to bed, mother. I am weaker than I thought," he said wearily, when the door opened noisily, and Mr. Seymour came into the room. Walter turned paler as he met his father's wild eyes, for he saw Mr. Seymour was in one of his worst moods. Glancing at the boy's pallid face, the intoxicated man walked unsteadily toward his wife. He invariably abused his most faithful friends when he had been drinking.

"Why don't you speak to me, madam?" he said in a threatening way. "You should have been preparing your husband's supper, instead of staying here with this sickly young fool."

"Oh, Alfred ! please be calm ! Poor Walter has been so very sick, you know," was the gentle answer. But the demon had done its work well,

and the half-crazed man grew more violent and quarrelsome.

“Why don’t you attend to me, madam? I’ll make you, then,” he shouted, and raised his hand to strike her. That cruel blow never fell upon her, though there rang through the house a heart-broken cry. Katherine will never forget how her mother’s voice sounded that night,—never!

Brave, faithful Walter had rushed forward, weak as he was, and taken the blow aimed at his mother. Crushed to the floor, he lay perfectly still, with white face and closed eyes. Was he dead? No. So much excitement in his weak state had overpowered him. That was not the worst. On his blue-veined temple there was a dark, purplish mark, where his head had struck the sharp corner of a bureau. It is needless to relate how the anguished mother bent over her son during all that long, terrible night.

It was a cloudy Autumn morning. He had lain in a death-like swoon for hours, his finely proportioned head thrown back upon the pillow, his kindly, dark eyes closed, and the heavily fringed lids drooping upon the wan cheeks. They opened the door to admit air, and the wailing

notes of a distant swamp-bird, floating in, made the inner silence mournfully impressive. Suddenly his eyes opened; there was a conscious look in them. He murmured something. "Where is father?" Ah! poor, faithful heart! It turns with divine forgiveness and love to him who has so ruthlessly wasted the fair, young life.

Katherine brought her father to the room. He is quite sober now. His drawn, agonized face does not look as it did a few hours since.

"So you wanted to see me, my boy!" he says, trying hard to speak calmly, his tender heart and loving nature showing itself now he was sober. As he takes Walter's wasted hand in his own, he breaks down utterly, and sobs aloud.

"Oh, don't! father, please don't!" says Walter feebly. "I don't blame you in the least, father. I only want to tell you not to grieve too much over what happened last night; you were not yourself; you did not know what you were doing. I forgive you, father, freely, and pray that God may bless and help you." Then, after a pause: "I think I am dying; every thing looks strange and dim, and it

seems so hard to breathe. But I want to beg of you to be kind to mother. Oh! do promise me that, father; I can't rest easy until you do. If you must drink, stay away from home until you are sober; you may strike her sometime when I am not here to stand between."

Mr. Seymour's voice is half-choked with sobs: "I'll do the best I can, my dear boy," he says.

It is a few minutes before Walter speaks again. Then he raises his eyes to his mother's face, and the old bright smile is in them.

"Mother, I stood by you till the last." To Katherine, who is weeping: "Don't cry, little sister! God is on my side, and I am on His."

He closed his eyes wearily, and they thought all was over, as the painful breathing grew almost inaudible. Once again those speaking eyes opened, to give them all the last loving look. Then the true heart ceased to beat.

More of a hero in his truthful beautiful character, in the toil and hardship borne so uncomplainingly, in his unselfish devotion to his family, than many a soldier who falls on the field of battle: Walter Seymour was dead.

CHAPTER III.

MOTHERLESS.

"Alas, the cloud grows darker."

Katherine and Tom sat in the orchard, talking about their mutual troubles. The children's faces were very sober ; over their heads the birds sang gaily, as if trying to call them away from sad thoughts.

The saucy blackbirds chattered heartlessly, and the robin in the apple-tree sang as if his throat had suddenly changed into a silver lute ; two yellow harvest apples fell from the bough into the long grass at their feet, all unheeded.

How sorrowful the past few weeks had been ! Their mother was much worse ; another hemorrhage had left her completely prostrated ; all who looked at her felt that the leaves of the coming Autumn would fall upon her grave. That day when the reaper was out of order, Mr. Seymour had gone to Elgin, and drank deeply. He had

not been so reckless before since Walter's death. He now cast prudence and conscience to the winds, and was absent from home most of the time. It was a rainy season, and had it not been for faithful Jim, most of the grain would have been lost or badly damaged, as Mr. Seymour neglected every thing, now that the mad passion for drink was upon him. He forgot his sick anxious wife, his children, indeed every duty toward home, man and God.

When sober, he possessed many noble qualities. Fascinating in manners, when he chose to be agreeable his easy independent grace won people's liking. Strangers felt his refinement and mental strength, and instinctively paid him homage. His tenants looked upon him as a superior being ; he was a just and generous landlord. His personal appearance put to flight all one's preconceived idea of an intemperate man. — Deacon Dewey, a shining light in the Linden Center church — a neighbor of Mr. Seymour's, and a man who had never, in all his life, drank any thing stronger than tea — looked far more like a drunkard than did Mr. Seymour.

The traditional drunkard in temperance sto-

ries, is represented with weak, watery eyes, a red and bloated face, slouching gait, etc. Mr. Seymour showed none of these outward indications of dissipation. In brief, Nature had gifted him with rare manly beauty; and though for days he would break every law of physical well-being, a little quiet, with sober living, would restore the clear tints to his complexion, his nerves would become composed, his eyes clear and bright. Had you called upon him then, you would have been received with the cordial courtesy of an accomplished gentleman, which he was by birth and education; and you would scarcely have believed that a few glasses of wine could change such a polished man into a half-crazed demon.

Sadly conscious of his violence and irresponsibility when under the influence of liquor, he kept his word to Walter, and was absent from his wife's sick room most of the time.

It was very lonely for the children. Lyddy moved softly around the house, and never crooned long ballads to them now.

"I'd rather stay out here than in the house, Kathie, it's so awful still up there now," said Tom

dolefully, as the children sat under the old apple-tree.

“It is because mother is so sick, Tom. Do you know, I sometimes fear she will never get well?”

Tom’s lips tremble at these words, and he turns away to conceal his tears; he is a manly little fellow, and half-ashamed to let Katherine see his grief.

“Dear brother,” she says softly, taking the brown hands in her own, “I will always love you, and if mother dies you must come to me with all your troubles. I will try to do by you as she would have done.”

“You are always kind to me, Kathie,” he says, “I don’t see how you could treat me any more kindly than you do——”

Lyddy here interrupts the children’s talk. Standing in the porch she calls to them, “Oh, Miss Katherine! Katherine!” The girl springs to her feet, and bounds away like a deer.

“What is it, Lyddy? Is mother worse?” she asks breathlessly.

“Wall, she’s awful poorly. Miss Katherine, you come in here,”—beckoning Katherine to come

into the pantry. Lyddy's eyes were swollen and red with weeping.

"Oh, dear! Miss Katherine"—she says to the young girl who had followed her—"the doctor has jest left, and when he saw your ma he looked dreadful solemn, and he says we must send for your sister right away—and—Oh, dear! how shall I tell you the rest?" and she burst out weeping.

Katherine's eyes grew larger and darker, and her hands clenched convulsively in the effort to be composed.

"Lyddy," she says in a whisper, "I know it all. Mother is dying."

"Yes," answered Lyddy. "I dreaded to tell you, but the doctor said she could not live until Sunday. He said she might go any time. Oh, Kathie! I am so sorry for you and Tom."

"I know you are, Lyddy," says Katherine gravely. "Have you sent for Helen?"

"No."

"Well, please tell Jim to saddle Firefly, and be ready to carry a dispatch to Elgin for me."

Mechanically she wrote the dispatch, and then stole softly into her mother's room. Dur-

ing that long night, she remained at the bedside of her dying mother — a patient figure, watchful and quiet, but dumb to all Lyddy's entreaties that she should try and get a little rest. "I will stay with my mother while I can," was her answer to all appeals.

Good Doctor Gardiner came early in the morning.

"You are an early riser, my little maid!" he said, looking down upon her kindly. Something in the expression of her face made the doctor's glasses grow misty, as he laid a kindly hand upon the brown braids.

"Poor child!" he said softly; "you are far too womanly for your years."

That afternoon Helen came — a very sad homecoming. Few words were spoken by the sisters, but a long, close pressure of the hand told their sympathy for each other, and strengthened them to bear the coming bereavement.

Mr. Seymour did not stand by his wife's deathbed. They had sent for him, and the children knew by their mother's wistful eyes, how she longed for his presence in that supreme hour.

Jim had found him in one of his worst orgies,

singing and muttering to himself. He was in no condition to stand in that hushed chamber, where the angel of death hovered.

It was in the early dawning of a Summer morn that the gentle soul found peace, and Katherine realized she was motherless.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

And though in silence, wishing joy."

Helen Seymour was a tall graceful blonde, beautiful in a cool northern way, and possessing a clear strong intellect, which made her a most agreeable companion. Although at school, she was engaged to be married at the time of her mother's death. Her betrothed was a man of high standing, and some wealth—a merchant in the village of Linden Center. He met her at the house of her uncle, Robert Seymour, had fallen in love, offered his hand, and had been accepted.

Mrs. Seymour's death, of course, delayed the nuptials; but after a year had passed, Mr. Gaylord begged for an early marriage day, and Helen yielded to his request. She was making preparations for the coming June, when an unexpected sorrow fell upon them. Helen was mending her father's coat one day, and found in the pocket a

letter, addressed in a woman's hand-writing. Her bright face grew serious as she read it carefully, and called Katherine to her side. To Helen, who knew the sly and designing nature of the woman who wrote it, the device was very transparent. It read as follows :

MR. SEYMOUR.

Dear Sir : Your strange language at my father's house last Thursday evening demands an explanation. Will you do me the favor of calling, and explaining what was meant ? Please call as soon as possible, for I am very unhappy about it.

Truly yours,

JANE CROSSBY.

This was all ; and, although apparently harmless, even a little prudish, Helen Seymour knew full well it was intended to lead her father into an intimate acquaintance.

Mr. Seymour rented his farm to good tenants soon after his wife's death, and removed to Linden Center, where there was an excellent academy, and Katherine and Tom were improving the educational advantages.

Among the many ladies who called upon Helen, the one she liked the least was Jane

Crossby ; a strange, deep woman, with an unnaturally soft voice, and cold, steely blue eyes. The woman called twice at Mr. Seymour's, much to Helen's surprise, as she had never returned the first, and indeed had treated her with very cold courtesy, not wishing to encourage further acquaintance.

After reading this note, however, she was in no doubt as to Jane Crossby's object in seeming so friendly.

Father Crossby, as he was called in the village, had two daughters. Both were far past girlhood, being, in fact, middle-aged women. Jane, the elder, had studied medicine, and for five years practiced it in St. Louis. She finally returned to her father's house, much to the sorrow of the family. She was a strange, wierd woman, and a mystery even to those who knew her best.

Mr. Seymour, while under the influence of liquor, was in the habit of calling at nearly every house in town, much to the shame and sorrow of his family, who tried in vain to keep him quietly at home, at such times.

One night he called at Father Crossby's, and behaved in the ridiculous manner natural to

a drunken man. He used strong language in the course of his conversation ; yet a *lady* would no more have thought of calling him to an account for it, under the circumstances, than of holding a lunatic responsible for his ravings.

Jane Crossby, among other episodes of her adventurous life, had been a hospital nurse during the war, and heard worse language than Mr. Seymour used without a blush upon her impassive mask-like face, or a quickened beat of her sluggish pulse. But now that there was an object to be gained, she thought it wise to be dignified.

Mr. Seymour called upon her, and apologized for his conduct ; and of course, she forgave him. She even made herself so agreeable, that he repeated his visit. The final result was that he one day brought Jane Crossby home as his wife.

Helen greeted her step-mother so haughtily, that the woman hated her ever after ; and made home so unpleasant, that she was obliged to take refuge with her uncle, Robert Seymour.

After her departure, Mrs. Seymour's hatred fell upon Katherine, and made the sensitive girl's life a burden. Mrs. Seymour forbade

any communication between the sisters, and tyrannized relentlessly over poor Katherine.

When June came—leafy beautiful June, the month of all the year which Katherine loved,—Helen Seymour was married. Katherine's heart yearned for her sister, those Summer days. Many and bitter were the tears she shed in secret. Appeal to her father was useless, as he seemed completely under the control of his wife. So the sisters rarely saw each other, though living in the same village.

A few days before the wedding, a gossiping neighbor was telling Katherine about the bridal outfit. "Of course you'll go to the weddin', Kathie," said Mrs. Weeks, crossing her arms over the gate, and settling herself for a long chat. "Your uncle Robert is goin' to make a splendid weddin' for Helen, and her clothes are just beautiful. Miss Baker was up there the other day, and they showed her the veil. She said it was the handsomest thing she ever saw—real lace, and fine as a cob-web. Your aunt, Mrs. Judge Fielding, sent it from New York. Helen will look like a Queen—she's as handsome as one. You'll go to the weddin', Kathie, of course."

"I am afraid my step-mother will not allow me to go, Mrs. Weeks! But I shall try, for Oh! I do so want to see Helen married. She is my only sister, you know," answered Kathie.

"Wall,

A mother's a mother all the days of her life,
A father's a father till he gets a new wife,"

quoted Mrs. Weeks, shaking her head solemnly. Just then her twins began quarrelling. The good lady rushed into the house to separate them, and Kathie went sorrowfully home.

She pondered long upon what Mrs. Weeks had told her, and that night dreamed she was "first bridesmaid" at Helen's wedding, dressed in pink tarletan, with rose-buds in her hair; but when she came where the minister stood, she glanced down and saw that her white satin slippers had changed into rough leather shoes, and her dress into old brown calico, much too short for her, and which she vainly tried to give a proper length, by pulling it down. She was weeping with disappointment when she awoke from her dream.

The day before the wedding was a glorious one, fragrant with the scent of roses, and musical with the songs of birds, so numerous in that little tree-

robed village. Timidly the young girl went to her father with her request.

“ Oh ! father ! I do so want to see Helen married. Can I go up to the church to-night ? ”

“ Your sister has been very ungrateful, Kathie,” he answered gravely. “ I have spent a great deal of money for her education, she has left my house, and now speaks of me very disrespectfully.”

“ But, father,” she pleaded, “ I only ask to go to the church to see her married. I could not go to the ‘ reception ’ at the house, for it will be quite grand, I suppose, and I haven’t any dress suitable ; at the church no one would notice me.”

“ Well, well, don’t annoy me any more, child. Go ask your mother, and if she is willing, I am,” was the reply ; and Katherine, with a faint heart, went to her step-mother.

She found her hard and unyielding as granite, deaf to all her eager entreaties.

“ If you go to Helen Seymour’s wedding, you can never come back to this house, Katherine ! ” was Mrs. Seymour’s answer. Katherine gave up the hope, and went sorrowfully about her tasks.

In the middle of the afternoon, Mrs. Sey-

mour came to her step-daughter and said she would allow her to go to the church that evening. Katherine was very grateful; but there was a mocking light in Mrs. Seymour's pale eyes as she added: "You must let *me* dress you."

When twilight came, the young girl donned her simple attire, and was just putting on hat and shawl, when she heard the step-mother's cat-like tread behind her. Mrs. Seymour's face looked unusually wicked and malicious.

"Why, Katherine Seymour! Are you going so soon? Don't you remember I said I would dress you? Come into my room."

Her heart beat anxiously as she followed her step-mother. She instinctively felt that some fresh torture had been prepared for her.

Mrs. Seymour took hat, shawl and dress, laying them carefully away. She then drew from a heap of soiled clothes in the closet a tattered gown which Katherine had cast off years before.

"Why, *this* dress looks ever so much better than *that*," cried the girl in dismay.

"I know it, Miss Katherine. That is just the reason I want you to wear this one, so put it

on! Any dress will look well enough for Helen Seymour's wedding."

With trembling hands Katherine put on the miserable garment. After Mrs. Seymour had added a pair of coarse leather shoes, much too large, and an old brown hood, she surveyed her work with a cruel smile, and said,

"You know you can stay at home if you don't wish to go in this garb. Ha! ha! ha! You are a pretty-looking wedding guest!" and her shrill laugh sounded through the house.

In poor Kathie's heart, there was a fierce struggle between love and pride. Love conquered, as it always did in that true, noble heart.

"I will go, madam!" she said firmly. Mrs. Seymour's jeer was checked as she watched the quiet face, and saw the brave spirit choke back the tears.

Katherine walked down toward the village church; nobody noticed the odd-looking little figure, as it was almost dark. The street was full of people hurrying along and talking gayly. Such a wedding was quite an event in this small place.

She kept her hood drawn closely about her face, lest some one should recognize her.

The church was brilliantly lighted, and full of people. Part of the seats in the central aisle had been reserved for relatives of the bride and groom. Toward these she walked, feeling out of place and guilty in this gay throng. The lights and hum of conversation bewildered her. Each moment she grew more timid and unhappy, but resolved to make the best of it now she had come.

She sat alone in the center of a pew, the back of which came nearly to her shoulders. Her great dark eyes shone like stars ; to her it was a brilliant and wonderful scene. The old brown hood, the shoes and dress were forgotten.

The delicate mouth looked sad, but she held her slender form erect. She was womanly, and outwardly composed. Of the storm of feeling raging in her heart, there were few signs.

The organist took his seat. The hum of conversation ceased. The bride and groom walked slowly down the aisle to the jubilant strains of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." Katherine's

heart gives a great throb, and then seems to almost cease beating.

“How lovely Helen is! Graceful as a willow, pure as a lily,” murmurs Katherine to herself.

The clergyman, in robes, stands waiting at the altar; the bridal party is grouped before him. In a deep impressive voice he utters the first words of the service: “Dearly beloved, we have gathered together”—She can endure her pent up feeling no longer in silence. Leaning her head upon the seat in front she sobs passionately. Not one word of that marriage service did she hear, except “Dearly beloved, we are gathered together.” Now it is over, and people are leaving their seats.

“Why, Katherine Seymour! I did not know it was you. Come home with me, and do not feel so badly,” says a kindly voice; but she heeds it not. She creeps away from the crowd, and walks through the darkness to the place called home; almost blind with falling tears.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE HANDS OF THE HUNTER.

“ Deliver thyself as a roe from the hands of the hunter, and as a bird from the hands of the fowler.”

Mrs. Seymour was anxious to return to the farm. She had married Mr. Seymour solely for his reputed wealth ; and naturally wished to taste the sweets of possession. Therefore she continued to speak of the advantages sure to follow their return.

“ Mr. Seymour, your tenants steal hundreds of dollars worth of grain from you every year ; I could prevent the loss if I were there ; and as to the children’s education, they are well enough educated now. They read too much as it is. Katherine is too dreamy and romantic ever to make a sensible woman. Tom does nothing but pore over his books, and is growing lazy and effeminate. Let him work on the farm awhile. It will help to make a man of him.”

Mr. Seymour consented, and a year after

Helen's marriage they returned to the brown house.

Once on the farm, every tree and shrub, every flowering plant, reminded Katherine of her dead mother; of happy childhood days; of the loving family circle, now broken; only Tom and herself left.

The birds sang joyously in the wild-plum thicket, and the locust blossoms made the air fragrant, as of yore. It was the same place, yet not the same to her, for the home feeling had vanished with her mother's face.

This cold crafty woman watched with lynx eyes every body on the farm; quarreled with the tenants; railed at Katherine about some petty fault; always saying unkind things about the girl's dead mother. She cast a blight over all around her. Katherine never found time now to wander off with her book for a dreamy, happy half-hour. Mrs. Seymour always made some pretext for putting the books out of sight, under lock and key.


There lived upon the estate an honest and industrious German named Steinberg, who worked eighty acres of land, keeping one-third of the pro-

ceeds. He had built a rough little cot near the farm-house. His wife occasionally assisted in the fields, leaving her three little children to amuse themselves as best they could. One day, while the mother was in the field, the youngest child wandered to the farm-house, and ventured in at the open kitchen door. Mrs. Seymour had placed a kettle of boiling water upon the floor, and the little fair-haired baby, after rolling her solemn blue eyes around for a moment, spied the kettle and started for it, expecting, no doubt, to have a fine time paddling in it with her chubby hands. Katherine sprang forward to prevent the child from touching it; but her step-mother caught her extended arm in a firm grasp.

“Let her alone,” she cried. “Just let her get well scalded, and she will know better than to come again, creeping around under my feet.”

Katherine called warningly to the little one; but it was too late; she had plunged both baby hands in the boiling water, drawing them out suddenly with a scream, in great pain and terror.

Mrs. Seymour smiled. “I don’t think I shall be bothered much more with her,” was her quiet remark.



Katherine grew faint with loathing fear, as she saw her step-mother's character in all its hideous cruelty.

The little one wailed and sobbed piteously. Katherine, taking the child, bound up the little blistered fingers, carried her home, and gently hushed her to sleep. As she laid her in the rude cradle, and noticed how pale the tear-stained little face was, how, even in sleep, a sob would sometimes shake her tiny frame—a thought of Katherine's dead mother, and of the living step-mother, came over her ; and she wept passionately.

When the time came for threshing the grain, Mrs. Seymour would frequently remain out doors during the whole night, lest some tenant might steal a few bushels of wheat or oats. She managed all the farm business, and the tenants found her a much more difficult person to please than easy Mr. Seymour.

One of them said to a neighboring farmer, to whom he had applied for land to work in the coming year: "I don't got noddings agen Missa Seymour—he vas a goot man,—von fery goot schentleman. He don't be hart on a poor man: but I would not schtay dare anudder year for tree

tousand dollar, I hates dot voman of his so bat. Oh! she be's von deffel! She do any dings. I gets 'fraid, somedimes, she vill burn down mine schtacks. Somedimes she come 'round mine house nights, und looks in mine vindows; and she vatch, vatch, all de whole dimes."

The man had summed up Mrs. Seymour's character very well, in his broken English.

One sultry Summer night Katherine lay awake and thought over her miserable condition; what an aimless, debasing life this woman was forcing her to lead — a life against which every pure and noble instinct of her soul revolted. Kept away from her only sister, and all means of cultivation, forced to find occupation for mind and body in the drudgery of farm work, she was growing desperately moody, quite unlike herself.

Thinking over these things that night a great longing crept over her. She arose, and, swayed by an irresistible impulse, dressed herself. Kneeling by the window, she looked out on the beauty of the calm night. She suddenly resolved to visit her sister, and ask Helen to take Tom and herself away from the farm — a place no longer home. She could return before morning.

Tom was sleeping in the adjoining room. She could hear him breathing heavily, poor boy, after his hard day's work. Katherine passed into his room and looked upon the sleeping brother.

"If he was only awake now, I would ask him to go with me," she said. "How thin and wan his face looks in the pale moonlight! Poor boy! I will let him sleep. I haven't the heart to awaken him. They have so broken and cowed his spirit with harshness, he would beg me not to go."

She leaned over and kissed his forehead softly, then stole back to her own room.

A long, low shed sloped from her window nearly to the ground. Noiselessly opening the window, she stepped out upon the roof, and was soon down. Old Carlo, the Newfoundland watchdog, heard her, and came out of his kennel, growling; she spoke in a low tone, he knew her voice, and crouched at her feet; she patted him kindly, and whispered, "Good bye, Carlo," little thinking it was a long farewell; little thinking years and years would pass ere she gazed again upon Tom's pale boyish face.

She walked swiftly down the locust avenue,

out into the main road. The beauty and silence of the night awed her; it touched and softened her heart. The sordid life she had been leading was forgotten. The latent poetry and reverence of her nature arose; fanned into life by the novelty and beauty above and around her.

She walked rapidly over the lonely road, yet felt no fear, although she had never been out so late at night before. A delightful feeling of freedom came over her, and she longed to lift her voice in thanksgiving and gratitude to God for His beautiful world.

To-morrow she would be back under the same tyranny, to-night she would enjoy the freedom of Nature.

She was only a child; but in her heart a great change was working. Almost unconsciously she was casting away childish things, prematurely awakening to the earnestness and sadness of life. She was too much absorbed to notice that the moon and stars were hidden, and that the sky had grown almost black with hurrying masses of dark clouds. A vivid flash of lightning startled her. She was three miles from Linden Center, and not a house in sight. Her enthusiastic spirits for-

sook her, and she felt weak and tired, but kept bravely on. It was useless to turn back now, for she was nearer the village than the farm.

There came another flash of lightning, followed by a crash of thunder that seemed to make the earth tremble beneath her hurrying feet. Then a rush of wind, and the big rain-drops began to fall heavily.

Katherine increased her pace, until now she was running, but the storm burst upon her in all its fury.

Helen Gaylord, lamp in hand, had gone over the house, closing the windows which were left open on this sultry night; returning to her room she heard a timid ring at the door.

She hesitated a moment, it being almost one o'clock, and the night was wild; but, laughing at her own cowardice, she went to answer the ring. Seeing no one at the door she peered out into the darkness; Katherine, frightened at her own boldness, had shrunk back into the shadow. Helen at last caught a glimpse of a dripping forlorn creature.

“Who is it?” she asked. “Is somebody taken sick? Do they want John to go for the doctor?”

"Oh! Helen"—said Katherine—"don't you know me? It is Kathie."

"Kathie!" echoed Helen in amazement.

"Yes, Kathie," was the answer. "Oh! Helen! I wanted so much to see you, and, as they would never let me out of their sight in day-time, I ran away to-night." The rest of the explanation was smothered on the kind, sisterly bosom, to which Helen clasped poor Katherine; laughing and crying over her, in true womanly fashion.

"My poor child! You have been out in all this storm," Helen cried, "and I did not know it. God willing, you shall never go back to that woman again, now you are away from her."

Katherine was muffled immediately in shawls, and by the time honest John Gaylord dressed himself, and had come out of his room, rubbing his eyes and asking what was the matter, Helen was holding a steaming cup of tea to her sister's lips, urging her to drink. But Katherine, being utterly exhausted in mind and body, was fast asleep. She had delivered herself, "As a roe from the hands of the hunter."

CHAPTER VI.

THAT MYSTERIOUS SOMEBODY.

"The gathering of the clan."

Katherine did not return to the farm for many years. She attempted to go back the same night, her love was so strong for Tom, but she was checked by Helen.

"Kathie, my dear little sister, I shall not allow you to go back to that woman again," said Helen Gaylord earnestly; "she is robbing you of your bright, girlish years, and every opportunity of improvement — ruining you in every way. You must let Tom go for the present, and stay with me. I shall have Uncle Robert and Cousin Azariah over to-morrow evening, and ask them what is to be done about your education, which has been shamefully neglected."

Helen had concluded to call a council of relatives the ensuing evening. Mr. Robert Seymour and his wife, and Deacon Azariah Carr, a cousin

of Alfred Seymour, on the maternal side, came to her house. Deacon Carr was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Lucinda Carr, or "Cousin Lucinda," as the two sisters always called her. She was a kindly lady and a firm friend of Helen's. Having no children of her own, it pleased her motherly heart to be kind to other people's.

Mr. Robert Seymour was a tall, thin man, of gentlemanly address, and dignified manners. He possessed a generous disposition, and had proved a true friend to Helen, when driven from her father's house; but he had quite a large family, and, although in comfortable circumstances, had little means to spare. Like all the Seymours, he was well endowed with family pride, and declared "somebody must do something for Katherine; somebody must have her educated, so that, when older, she may provide for herself by some refined employment." One that would not degrade the dignity of a Seymour, a lineal descendent of brave Sir Thomas Seymour, of Seymour Manor, Devonshire, England.

There was much talk during the evening, about this mysterious and indefinite "somebody."

Katherine — listening to the discussion, and feeling herself to be a useless and troublesome encumbrance — thought she would be very glad to see this person who owed her so much protection and assistance.

“Yes,” said Cousin Azariah, “somebody must have Katherine sent to a first-class school.”

Deacon Carr was an exceedingly worthy man, and had often expressed a deep interest in Katherine and Tom, the motherless younger children of Alfred Seymour ; and, partly because of these expressions, Helen had asked him to come to the family council. But the Deacon was a “very near man,” as the Scotch say, and the fear that he might be called upon for some pecuniary aid, made him uneasy and taciturn. Like many others, his sympathy, when it did not take a costly form, came naturally and easily enough ; but when there was danger of being called upon to express his sympathy substantially, he instantly grew more conservative, and quoted : “God helps those who help themselves.”

“Yes,” said Deacon Carr, “I say it’s a shame, Robert, that somebody don’t get Tom away too. Just see what a bad place it is for him ! There he

is, a growin' up without any schoolin' ; and that step-mother of theirs will never rest till she gets all Alf's property away from him, and into her own hands. I tell you Alf gets wus and wus every day. I met him tother day coming home from town, and that bay mare of his'n was all covered with foam, and he a driving like the very old Harry. I hollered to him, and asked what was his hurry; his only answer was a whoop like a wild Injun's, and he driv on. He driv so elus to my buggy, that he fairly scraped the wheel. He looked hard, Alf did, I tell ye."

" Yes," said Robert Seymour, " the boy ought to be got away from there,—no doubt of it. He is a fine bright lad. I can't see how Alf can let that woman influence him as she does, and disgrace himself and family. If he must drink, why don't he take his drinks at home, like a gentleman, instead of riding around as he does, calling on the best families in the country, when he is so beastly drunk? Only last week, I hear, he called at Judge Harford's at midnight, as he was riding home from Arlington, and knocked on the door with the handle of his whip. They were, very naturally, in no particular hurry to let him in ;

whereat his lordship was displeased, and smashed all the glass around the hall door ; howled about the house for half an hour, using terrible language, and finally went away. I think it would be a blessing to himself and others if he was shut up in an asylum, and kept there till he gets some common-sense into his head."

" Well, Uncle Robert," interrupts Helen, " I want to ask advice of you and Cousin Azariah about Katherine. I can not for several reasons, have her here, although I should be glad if she were near me. I was sent away to a boarding-school, when younger than she is, and I know mother intended sending her to a good school in a few years ; she would there learn many useful things beside what she is taught from books. Self-reliance for one thing ; and then, she ought to have music lessons. She has a very sweet voice ; you should hear her sing. She must have lessons on the piano, and there is no teacher in town."

Cousin Azariah interrupted Helen to repeat that ancient joke about a wash-board being the best instrument for a girl to learn to play on ; but nobody seemed to find this very mirthful, although

they managed to raise a feeble laugh, for Cousin Azariah was the richest man in the county, even if his jokes were, sometimes, in poor taste.

Helen continued : “ You know that farm of forty acres which belonged to mother ; it was willed to Tom, Kathie and myself ; but, by the terms of the will, can not be sold till the youngest of the three is of age. There is not the slightest use of asking father for the money to pay for Katherine’s education ; and I was thinking, perhaps I might be able to borrow the money on my share of the land, paying it when the farm is sold. I could pay the interest each year. Katherine is welcome to my share, and will need it, as well as her own, before her education is finished.”

“ Oh ! Helen ! ” cried Katherine, “ I can never take your money. I shall always hate myself if I rob you of your birth-right.”

“ Hush, child ! ” said her sister ; “ do you think I want to see you grow up an ignorant, helpless woman, with no means of taking care of yourself ? ”

“ No, indeed.”

“ Well, the best way you can show your love

for me, will be by improving your time when at school, and growing up a woman of whom I shall be proud."

Cousin Azariah did not know before that the forty-acre farm belonged to the children; he had been suspicious, at first, that Helen meant to ask pecuniary aid from him. He now cheered up and snuffing a bargain, was on the alert and very gracious. He knew the land was near a good grain market, and would likely increase rapidly in value. He also knew Helen, being greatly in need of money, would likely take whatever sum he offered for her interest; he was not the man to offer more than one-third of the real value.

"Well, girls," he said, "you know I have always taken a deep interest in you children, and it has been a great sorrier to me, to see your pa go on so, with such a fine family growing up around him. I used to try to reason with him about his ways—"

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Carr, "Mr. Carr is so tender hearted! Many and many a time he has come home from town and said to me: 'Lucinda, I saw Alf Seymour as drunk as a fool to-day, and there them childern of his'n is, growin' up with-

out any Christian influences or Gospel privileges around 'em. I declare it's too bad.' "

Azariah cast down his eyes, and twiddled his thumbs, as though modestly deprecating his wife's praise.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Azariah; "Mr. Carr has worried awful about you children; only this mornin' he was sayin' that somebody ought to do something for Katherine."

Mrs. Azariah shook her head impressively, as the grand climax, while Katherine and Helen tried to look properly grateful for such generous sentiments; but as said sentiments were not of such nature as to admit of definite thanks for definite services rendered, they kept a respectful silence.

After a few moments, Helen resumed the conversation; saying, timidly, "I had thought if Cousin Azariah would lend me the sum of four hundred dollars — taking my note, or, if he preferred, a mortgage on my share of the forty-acre farm — I would be able to repay it with proper interest. With this I could provide suitable clothing for Katherine, and, by economical management, send her to a good school for one year. This would be of great benefit to her," added

Helen, "if she studied diligently, as I know she would."

Deacon Carr looked very thoughtful for a few minutes. "Girls," he said, at last, "I'll tell you what I'll do, seein' it's you, and feelin' a deep interest in Katherine." Here he sighed, and taking out his pocket-handkerchief, solemnly wiped his nose. Helen, listening breathlessly, thinking that Cousin Azariah, being childless, had concluded to do some generous action. Perhaps he was about to say he would send Katherine to some excellent school for one year at his own expense. She thought how she had wronged him in her own mind by calling him selfish and avaricious, ready to talk loudly of what ought to be done, but never putting his hand in his own pocket to draw forth one cent for a generous act.

"He is really good at heart," thought Helen, "and will prove a true friend in our need."

Cousin Azariah continued:

"Yes, girls, I'll do it, although times is very hard, and it took my last shillin' to pay taxes this year. I don't care fer the land, fer 'tain't worth much to me. I'm 'land poor' already; but if you want money so bad, I can git two hun-

dred dollars fer ye, I guess, and you can sell me your share of the farm, Helen. You can't look after it yourself, any way, and I don't want to take your note, or a mortgage on the land, fer nobody can't never tell what may come up about sich things. Jist as like as not, yer pa might pitch into me about it, and I am gettin' old, and don't want no lawsuits onto my hands.

"Pshaw, Helen! your sheer in that farm ain't worth no two hundred dollars; but I can't see our Kathie growin' up without an eddication, fer lack of a little money."

"But the land really belongs to us children, Cousin Azariah," said Helen; "so, why not take a mortgage, and lend me the money?"

"Wall, of coorse, you kin take that offer, or not, jest as you feel about it," answered the deacon; "but I am an old man, and don't want no lawsuits. If I should git into law, it would ruin me."

Poor Helen, being hard pressed, gave her consent to the bargain, while the cunning old hypocrite, chuckling to himself over his good luck, assumed the air of a great benefactor.

So great an effect has cool presumption upon

most minds, that, although Helen had a secret feeling he was not a loser by the affair, she found herself thanking Cousin Azariah most humbly. A few days later, the sale having been concluded, he handed her two hundred dollars.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEN-PORTRAIT OF A GENTLEMAN.

“And thus he bore, without abuse,
The grand old name of gentleman.”

Katherine's two years at school were quiet and uneventful. She learned rapidly, and at seventeen was a lovely girl, and bright scholar, with a mind well stored with knowledge for one so young.

A letter came from her aunt, Mrs. Judge Fielding, of New York, containing a most cordial invitation for Katherine to come East, and spend a year with her relatives there. After some deliberation, the sisters accepted the invitation, pleased with the prospect of the superior social advantages Katherine would have in that brilliant city, and grateful to an aunt whom they had never seen, for this kindly recognition.

In the back parlor at Judge Fielding's, a party are enjoying a quiet game of whist. A glowing

fire in the grate, makes the handsome room, with its rich heavy furniture, look bright and cheery. This evidently is a home where cultivated taste has selected the adornments, and a full purse paid the bills. Several fine paintings hang upon the walls, among them a portrait of the lady at the whist-table, who is rebuking her daughter for a careless play. The portrait was painted nearly thirty years ago, when Mrs. Fielding was a bride ; but time dealt kindly with her, and the peach-like cheek retained its bloom ; the haughty and regular features, the brilliant, dark eyes, were the same.

The hair is silvered, and the face, which was as careless and smiling as a child's when the portrait was painted in repose, is now anxious.

She is dressed to-night, in a heavy black silk, plainly made ; upon her head a small square of point lace ; a collar of the same is fastened by a curiously fashioned cameo. She is a regal looking woman, and far more likely to attract admiration, even now, than either of her daughters.

The jolly, portly gentleman, who resembles in appearance the traditional English squire, is Mr. Edward Seymour — Mrs. Fielding's brother

—a man of wealth, dignity and accomplishments. He can sing delightfully ; tell a story wittily, never coarsely ; entertain a select dinner-party charmingly ; or quote Latin when the occasion demands, without seeming in the least degree pedantic.

He inherited a moderate fortune, which his marriage with a wealthy heiress had greatly increased. Not being troubled with an ambition to become wealthier, he settled down in a handsome mansion near his favorite sister, and philosophically concluded to take the world in a gentlemanly, easy manner.

In matters of art he is a thorough critic. In addition to his natural taste for such things, he spent several years in Europe among the grand old pictures and sculpture stored in its classic centers. During his stay he also gathered material for the Seymour family history which he has now nearly completed.

He is a most genial companion, for in addition to the advantages of travel, his leisure life has given him opportunity for study and literary pursuits. At times he is a little cynical. He is rather vain, although a stranger would not suspect it, for

he keeps this well hidden under his courtly, dignified manner.

His clear, fresh color is more English than American. His slow drawling pronunciation, and indifferent manner of delivery, make his sarcasms doubly cutting.

He has just made one of his cool speeches to his niece — Miss Lottie — reminding that young lady of the decorum due to whist; she stops her merriment, and studies her cards attentively. This bright, merry girl, is just home from boarding-school. She sees the ridiculous side of every thing, but is warm-hearted and winning; neither she, nor her sister Sarah, have inherited their mother's beauty, much to the mother's sorrow, who never ceases to bewail this lamentable fact.

Hugh Fielding, now at college, is a true Seymour, being tall, straight, and well formed. He has a handsome face, and the graceful manners of a courtier.

Sarah is at the piano, playing light airs from a favorite opera. She is plain, but a very intelligent girl of twenty-seven. Mrs. Fielding is disappointed that Sarah, being her daughter, has not married some foreign nobleman, or an Ameri-

can millionaire. Judge Fielding — a grave, sensible man — is in no hurry to see his daughters leave the shelter of home; the mother thinks it reflects seriously upon her management that Sarah should remain so long unmarried. She has become recently convinced that Hartley Barron is Sarah's only hope; if he does not propose soon, she is determined to give the girl up as a confirmed old maid, and push Lottie more into society; sometimes she thinks, with a shudder, she may have both daughters left upon her hands.

The truth is, Sarah's maidenhood is partly due to her mother's folly. Mrs. Fielding has "managed" too much, and her zeal has driven away several eligible suitors, who were really fond of Sarah. Matters were often progressing very well, when Mrs. Fielding's anxiety would get the better of prudence. She would be so affable toward the gentleman, that Sarah, knowing by sad experience her mother's foible, would become alarmed, and turn cool and reserved, to counterbalance her mother's transparent kindness.

Mrs. Fielding, with what she considered exquisite delicacy, would inquire about the gentleman's family, or, perhaps, ask the amount of his

income. Sometimes, of course, her questions would be politely answered, but the suitor would think mamma was quite too anxious to have her daughter settled, and would slowly retire from the field.

This so galled the proud spirit of Sarah, that she would request her mother never again to question gentlemen about their incomes, or praise her to them. Mrs. Fielding, being nettled, would remark testily, "Your being an old maid need not be laid at my door. If I do ask questions sometimes, they are so carefully disguised that no man would imagine I had any object beyond mere curiosity. No, Sarah, you look like the Fieldings — you act like them. Hugh is the only child I have who does not disappoint me."

"Mother," Sarah would answer with tears in her eyes, "am I to blame because God did not make me beautiful?"

"It is not the lacking of beauty alone," Mrs. Fielding would answer, "but you are so stubborn! Why are you so cool toward Hartley Barron?"

"It is my way, mother; if a man loves me, he will have the courage to say so without my

meeting him more than half way," Sarah would reply.

Despite these foibles, Mrs. Fielding was a woman of intelligence, dignity, and feeling. But she was a victim of the mania which troubles all fashionable mothers more or less, and she did not conceal it as skilfully as some would have done.

But we will return to the party in the back parlor. The game of whist was over, and Mr. Edward Seymour was in the hall, putting on his overcoat, when Mrs. Fielding called him back.

"Don't go yet, Edward," she said, "I want to speak with you a few minutes. You know Katherine Seymour will reach New York to-morrow night, and some one must go to the depot to meet her. Can you go, and take Lottie with you?"

"Certainly I will go," was Mr. Seymour's answer. "I presume the poor child will feel bewildered at first, and be very glad to see a friendly face after her long journey alone. I hope she will be a credit to us. Of course, she will be awkward and bashful at first, coming from that barbarous country. Alf was a fool for ever going west,

when he could have done far better here, poor fellow."

"Well," said Mrs. Fielding, "I don't know, of course, what the child may be; she is a Seymour, Edward, and unless she proves a notable exception, will have brains enough to learn rapidly, now that she has an opportunity, and tact, too, not to show her ignorance.

"Alfred was very agreeable and polished in his manners, and if she resembles him in person, I am sure we shall all be proud of her."

"Alf looked well enough," said Edward Seymour. "All the Seymours are fine-looking—but he had no firmness. I only hope she possesses more strength of character than her father did."

"I wonder if she will be nice!" said Lottie. "I hope she plays, for I want some one to play duets with me, ever so much; Sarah never will keep time."

"Now be sure and call for me to-morrow evening," she called to her uncle, as he closed the hall door.

The next evening, Lottie and her uncle were at the depot as the train from the west came in.

"How shall we ever find her, Uncle?" said

Lottie. "She wrote that she would wear a gray suit, but half the ladies wear gray traveling suits, so that is no distinction."

They stood watching the crowd of people that came out of the cars; some of the ladies looked frightened at the clamoring hackmen, who leaned over the railings, shouting and beckoning.

One young girl, in a gray traveling suit, seemed very timid, and looked bewildered. Mr. Seymour thought that she must be his western niece; going up to her, he touched her gently on the arm, and asked, "Is your name Katherine Seymour?"

"No, sir," answered the young lady.

Just then Lottie seized her uncle's arm, saying: "Oh, Uncle, just see that lovely girl coming out of the car. I declare, she looks ever so much like Hugh."

Mr. Seymour elbowed his way through the crowd, and met the young lady, who was walking along quickly.

"Is this Katherine Seymour?" he asked, quite sure he was right this time; he, too, noticed her remarkable resemblance to Hugh Fielding.

"Yes, sir, my name is Katherine Seymour,"

she answered, giving him a quick, bright look from her pleasant brown eyes, "and you, I presume, are my Uncle Edward." Thus the first plunge into acquaintance, with her strange relative, was over.

Mr. Seymour led her to Lottie, who was so amazed at the quiet, graceful manners, the beauty, and generally refined appearance of her cousin, that, for once, she could not talk.

"I declare, mother, I don't see where she ever got that easy manner, out in that horrid West," said Lottie to her mother when they were alone for a moment.

Mrs. Fielding remarked: "Oh! she is a thorough Seymour, Lottie." That fact was sufficient reason why she should possess all the graces of mind, manner and person.

Mrs. Fielding had a number of handsome dresses made for her, and they spent nearly every evening out, or receiving company at home. Thus Katherine entered on a life that seemed to her all brightness.

Lottie talked often to Katherine of a gentleman named Hartley Barron.

"Mother wants him to marry Sarah," said

talkative Lottie. "He is called one of the best lawyers in the city, and so young, too, for such fame—only twenty-nine; but he is so very dignified and sober, that I don't like him nearly so well as Harry Featherstone, although I suppose he has six times the brains Harry has. He has a splendid voice, and sings sweet old-fashioned songs."

"Who sings old-fashioned songs?" asks Katherine.

"Why, Hartley Barron, of course. He never will sing opera songs, and says he never had any ambition to rival a stage tenor, although he could, I'm sure, if he only chose to sing opera music."

"Describe him, Lottie, for I want to know all about this possible cousin of mine. He ought to be a king among men to win Sarah, for she is an uncommon girl."

"I am poor at description," Lottie answers gayly, "but if you desire it very much, I will try."

"First, he is tall, with broad shoulders—I do admire broad-shouldered men—and carries himself proudly as though there might be a great many good people in the world, but only one Hartley Barron; and—well, I shall have to give

an illustration, as our professor used to say at school. You have doubtless heard the story, dear, of the old Scotch nobleman whom some one had seated at the foot of the table at a grand banquet, when he should have been placed at the head. His host, discovering the mistake, apologized profusely before the entire company. 'Na, na, never ye mind,' said the old earl quietly, yet grandly, 'for wherever the Macgregor sits, there is the head of the table.'

"Well, I can imagine Hartley Barron saying those words, only changing them to suit the occasion—like this, perhaps: 'Wherever Hartley Barron is, there the company is select.'"

"What a very conceited fellow he must be!" said Katherine.

"Oh! no, not conceited—nobody can call Hartley Barron conceited," was Lottie's quick reply. "His pride is too deep and too noble for that. It is only a grand kind of confidence in himself; and really, Katherine, when one sees how the best intellects in the land delight to do him honor, this confidence seems justifiable. But, to continue: He has a face that some would call handsome, others, interesting or intellectual, remarkable and

distinguished. His brow is high, broad and white—a veritable marble tablet, whereon is inscribed ‘Intellect.’ His nose is large and finely proportioned, while the nostrils are delicately chiseled, and vibrate slightly, when he is excited, like those of a spirited horse. His mouth is large and firm-looking, yet sensitive. His smile is rare, but sweet and winning, though half-hidden by his heavy mustache. By the way, I don’t admire them generally; do you?”

“Don’t admire what?”

“Mustaches!”

“I don’t know. Go on, please.”

“Well,” continues Lottie, “his head is magnificent—actually statuesque, and, Kathie, he don’t part his hair in the middle. His eyes—oh, I can’t describe them, for their expression is always changing. Once or twice I have seen them looking so stern that they actually made me shiver. Generally their expression is very pleasant. Sometimes, when smiling, they look merry and roguish. When listening to music, they grow soft, sad, and sweet as a woman’s eyes.”

“Humph!” said her companion, “a poor comparison! say a deer’s eyes.”

“Well, you will see him to-morrow for yourself. He comes here every Sabbath evening, to sing sacred music with Sarah.”

“Lottie,” said Katherine, “you have missed your vocation; your descriptive powers are wonderful. You have painted Mr. Barron in glowing colors, almost as bright as the author of ‘Rinaldo, the Red Avenger,’ might have used in picturing his hero.”

“Oh! of course,” said Lottie, not liking the sarcasm in Katherine’s voice, “I understand he is by no means equal to the polished, quiet, modest gentlemen who live in Chicago; but, you see, he is only a poor, benighted New York lawyer. Uncle Edward, who has traveled a great deal, says he can always tell a Chicago man the moment he enters the car, by his loud, bragging way. They always talk about getting ‘corners’ on grain, whatever that may mean. Shockingly vulgar people, I should judge.”

“Yes, I don’t doubt it,” said Kathie, quietly. “I don’t know much about the place; I only passed through Chicago on my way here.”

CHAPTER VIII.

HER HERO.

"But, O my first ! O my best !
How could I choose but love thee ?"

Sunday evening Mr. Barron called. Katherine was in her own room. She had not finished her toilet, and did not come down until he had been there some time. He was singing a duet with Sarah as Katherine entered the room, and she had a good opportunity to observe him before being introduced. He was standing in a position that showed his fine profile to advantage.

"He is certainly a very noble-looking young man," she said to herself, and then forgot every thing but the music.

His voice was deep, strong and tender ; and he sang with such earnestness and feeling that tears were in her eyes when the duet closed. Mrs. Fielding, with pride in her manner, brought Mr. Barron to Katherine's side, saying : "My niece, Miss Seymour, Mr. Barron."

He bowed low, then, glancing at her, saw her eyes were filled with tears. Had she been a practiced coquette, instead of an artless, honest girl, she could have taken no surer method of attracting his attention.

Genuine sensibility is always bewitching in a woman ; and so sincere a tribute to the power of his singing, as tears in those beautiful eyes, was certainly flattering to Hartley Barron.

“I see you love music,” he said quietly ; then spoke to her about the great singers he had heard. This, and kindred subjects, led him to talk about his travels. His descriptions of mountain scenery were so vivid, yet so full of reverent love for the beautiful in nature, that Katherine, listening, forgot herself, and was leaning slightly forward, her large earnest eyes fixed upon the speaker, her lips slightly parted, her enthusiastic soul shining through her eyes, when Mrs. Fielding came and asked Mr. Barron to sing again.

Katherine drew a long, sighing breath, on being called from those purple mountain heights, where she had been led by a soul as ardent and sincere as her own.

Barron declined singing any more that evening ;

and as their conversation was interrupted, soon left. He invited the young ladies to attend the opera next evening.

“ Well, now, don’t you think Mr. Barron quite *distingué* ? ” was Lottie’s first remark, after the departure of their guest.

Katherine, who was brushing her long, brown hair, answered, that after listening to his singing a short time, she thought no more about his face ; and after he conversed, if he had been as small and insignificant as Ulysses of old, she would not have noticed it, for, like the eloquent ancient, when he spoke he was so learned, so wise, one forgot every thing save the mind that could originate such thought.

“ Nonsense ! Leave all that classical rubbish to Uncle Edward. He likes it, and I don’t ; so don’t evade the question, please.”

“ What question, pray ? ”

“ O, you provoking girl ! you know what question. Don’t you think he is very fine looking ? ”

“ Do you think he is fine looking, Lottie ? ”

“ Of course I do ; but will you please answer my question ? Yes, or No ? ”

“ I never did like handsome men.”

“Do you think he is fine looking?”

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘fine looking,’ dear.”

Lottie, half offended at Katherine’s mischievous evasion, rose to go. Katherine, thinking she had teased her cousin enough for once, ceased brushing her hair and gave a straightforward answer to the question.

“Well, then, I will tell you. I think his face is more beautiful than I ever dreamed a man’s could be ; it is strong, manly beauty, too. Of course we have all seen thousands of those silly, red-cheeked dandies, called handsome. We have also seen thousands of the opposite class ; heavily bearded, with bold black eyes. But never, before, have I seen a man whom I could honestly say possessed *real* beauty — such as God gave him when He created man in His own image.

“I have read of such men, and have thought a great poet’s face must look something as Mr. Barron’s did to-night, while talking to me — majestic ! To-night I have seen one who might inspire trust. I would place hopes, fortune or life in his care and calmly say : ‘I know that all will be well with me, for I am in your hands.’

“There are no lines of dissipation upon that face. He would not look nearly twenty-nine, were it not for his eyes. There is a half tired, half sad look in them, which makes his face, otherwise young and fresh, seem very earnest and grave.”

“Why Katherine, you are eloquent! Sarah must be careful, or you will be stealing her friend’s affections from her — that is if she ever possessed them — which is very doubtful. I do not think that Hartley Barron cares very much for any thing except his work. He seems to care for nothing but his ambition, and seeks ladies’ society very little. Sarah is such a demure, old-maidish thing, that he likes to talk art with her, and discuss deep, horrid old philosophical works. His affection for her is brotherly, and mother is foolish enough to think it love. Probably ‘the wish is father to the thought.’ But, nonsense! Hartley Barron will not think of marrying till he has satisfied restless ambition, become President, or something nearly as great. He would not waste the time to woo a lady properly.”

“Well, my dear,” said Katherine gayly, “no doubt Mr. Barron would feel highly flattered if he knew

the interest with which we are discussing his affairs. It is nearly one o'clock, and we had better retire. We shall have little enough sleep; and to-morrow evening, you know, this wonderful Mr. Barron escorts us to the opera."

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE OPERA.

"You, you are as young
As Eve, with Nature's day-break on her face."

The next evening when Mr. Barron came, he found only Katherine in the parlor. Mrs. Fielding had Sarah up stairs, drilling her in deportment. Just now she was walking under her mother's critical eye — with shoulders erect, and head thrown slightly back. She had previously made the poor girl arrange her hair in three different styles, and then volunteered this soothing remark :

"You always manage to do up your hair unbecomingly."

Lottie was usually five minutes late, even if she had the entire afternoon for dressing. Thus it happened that Katherine was alone when Mr. Barron arrived. She did not see him at first, she sat at the piano, singing softly to herself an old song. He stood looking at her for several minutes, before she was aware of his presence.

She made a beautiful and striking picture. Her dark eyes were dewy-bright with pleased expectancy. Her cheeks as softly flushed as a sea shell. This was a wonderful evening — her first opera.

Her fair neck and arms were modestly revealed by the loose sleeves, and Marie Antoinette corsage, of her delicate blue dress. A slight half-wreath of white heath-flowers, rested lightly upon her smooth dark braids.

Hartley Barron thought she made the fairest picture he had seen for many a day; and the admiration had not faded from his eyes, when she came forward to meet him. He was a man little given to compliments, and therefore only asked after her health, gravely. He remarked that her last song was a favorite of his, and requested her to finish it. The ladies just then entered, however, and as it was already time for the opera, they left.

It was a memorable evening. The prima donna was singing one of her most pathetic parts as they entered. Katherine turned pale, dazzled by the lights and the brilliant assembly. She soon became composed, and listened to the music with tears in her eyes — tears of

enthusiasm and happiness. When the song was finished and the heroine had fainted gracefully, and had been carried off the stage by two clumsy attendants, Katherine drew a long breath. Turning, she saw Mr. Barron's eyes upon her. He had been watching her instead of the opera.

"Well," he said smilingly, "are you very much disappointed?"

"Oh! no!" was the prompt response. "What a grand thing it is to be a great singer or actress. I love dramatic poetry, and I have so often wished I could be an actress,—that is I mean I wish I had the genius to become a great actress."

"Heaven forbid!" he said earnestly.

She was a little frightened at this, and thought she must have said something foolish or wrong; so she continued, apologetically:

"Oh, I presume I have rose-colored views of such things — far too much so, perhaps, being only a country girl. But surely you will admit that to be able to express, with true eloquence, the thoughts and emotions which great poets have given us, is a noble art."

"I agree with you," he answered, "in calling

it a noble art ; and will even admit that about one actor in a thousand appreciates and has a genuine love for his art ; but believe me, Miss Seymour, you are best as you are."

Their party now received an addition in the shape of Mr. Harry Featherstone. This young gentleman was a delightful contrast to Mr. Barron, in character and appearance. He was blonde, blue-eyed and rather handsome, though boyish in looks. He was good-humored and gentlemanly ; never at a loss for small talk — seldom, indeed, ever turning into any other kind. In a word, he was a "New Yorker" of the day. He was wealthy, consequently, much sought after by the prudent mammas of marriageable daughters. There was a strata of good sense and feeling hidden beneath his slightly Dundrearyish manner, which flattery had not entirely destroyed. He had noticed Katherine's fair and star-like beauty, and came to ascertain the stranger's name.

He was welcomed cordially by Lottie, who made room for him at her side. Sarah presented him to Katherine, with whom he chatted entertainingly. He could be very agreeable when he chose,

and there was a freshness about Katherine that interested him. He told her several little anecdotes about great singers, and described a cruise he had taken in his yacht, the previous Summer, followed by the graphic description of a new play, not yet out, but "sure to be the sensation" when it came. Mr. Featherstone seemed exceedingly well informed about plays and play writers. During this running fire of small talk, he managed adroitly to compliment Katherine.

All this was very different from Barron's grand descriptions of scenery, places and people. It was as the waterfall among the Berkshire hills, to the great Niagara ; but it was new to Katherine, and Featherstone's animated manner made his conversation seem far more brilliant than it really was. She soon found herself smiling at his remarks, and talking as freely with him as if they had been old friends.

Meantime, Barron seemed to be deeply engaged in explaining Huxley's last theory to Sarah Fielding, but in reality, was watching Katherine's every look and word.

Presently, the curtain fell on the last scene, and they arose to go. Featherstone seized Kath-

erine's opera cloak, and wrapped it around her with an air of tenderness, while Mr. Barron seemed completely absorbed in the conversation he was carrying on with Sarah. Apparently he did not look toward them. Harry accompanied them to the carriage, and bade them good-night, after remarking that he should give himself the pleasure of calling soon.

The ride home was a very quiet one. Barron was silent and thoughtful, and did not once address himself to Katherine. He had been very agreeable before, and talked with her so kindly, that she was puzzled and somewhat saddened at the change.

Lottie remarked that Harry Featherstone had seemed to exert himself that evening to please Katherine. "He is generally too lazy to make himself agreeable," she continued; "nevertheless, I think he is really good-hearted. Why, at Mrs. Dyrencourt's ball last week, he danced three times with that little Mary Ross. She is always a wall-flower, and dances horribly, while he is a splendid dancer, and all the girls were dying to have him ask them; but he danced with Mary just because he felt sorry for her. Well, it made

her quite the fashion for the evening, and you ought to have seen how it changed her. She really rivaled Grace Leigh, she received so much attention. Now, I call that quite noble in Harry."

"Heroic, Miss Lottie; quite a modern Sir Launcelot," said Barron.

"Why, I thought you and Harry were great friends, Mr. Barron."

"So we are, as friendships go. Featherstone is a shallow fellow — good-hearted enough, I dare say, though with no depth of thought or feeling. It is so with all these young dandies who have fortunes left them, they are flattered so much; and women are most to blame for spoiling them, I think. If Featherstone had some good motive for working, he might make quite a man some day."

"Might make quite a man some day?" echoed Lottie. "Why, Mr. Barron! I think you are unjust to Harry Featherstone!"

The truth was, Barron had taken this dislike to young Featherstone that very evening; had disliked him ever since his attention to Katherine, though he never admitted to himself that jealousy was the cause of this sudden dislike.

He said to himself that she was young and innocent, and he did not like to see so pure and modest a nature tarnished and desecrated by the stale compliments that these city beaux were always showering upon young girls. He felt much better now that he had relieved his mind in a quiet way, and was in better spirits when they arrived at Judge Fielding's.

As it was late, he refused to go into the house. Mrs. Fielding met the girls in the hall, and enquired of Sarah, in a stage whisper, what had transpired during the evening—if Mr. Barron had been attentive to her?

"Sarah," she whispered, "what did he say? I told Lottie to talk to Katherine, and give him an opportunity to tell you his intentions. The opera is just the place for a man to say something leading to a declaration. I don't suppose any one like Hartley Barron would speak out very plainly in so public a place; but the music, and the feeling that he has the girl he loves under his protection for the time, are quite apt to lead a man to say things not easily taken back next day—that is, if he is honorable. He loves you, Sarah. I have watched his looks, and I know I

am right. What did he say? Can't you confide in your own mother?"

"Oh, mother," answered Sarah, wearily, "if you are really anxious to know all that Mr. Barron said since leaving the house, ask Katherine. He said quite as much to her as to me."

A few evenings later, Barron called, and, as he arose to leave, told the ladies that important business would render it necessary for him to be absent from the city about a week.

"I don't like to go," he said, "and one reason for my reluctance is that I have some valuable papers which I can not well take with me. I am at a loss where to stow them for safe-keeping. They are invaluable to one of my clients, as they throw light upon a case I have had in hand four years; and which, I hope, is now approaching a successful close. I usually keep them in the safe at my office, where I sleep. There has been so many successful bank-robberies lately, that I am losing confidence in bank safes."

"Why, Barron, bring your papers here;" said the judge, "they will be as safe here as anywhere—safer, I think. I'd like to see a burglar get into my vault, to say nothing of the

safe, which is really a good one ; safes alone are not much protection against our New York experts.

“ Thanks for your kind offer,” was the reply.
“ I will bring the papers to-morrow.”

The judge then took him to the library, and showed him the vault. It was a small space left in the brick wall, surrounded by solid masonry. In it was the safe, containing Mrs. Fielding's jewels, some family plate, and the judge's valuable papers. The door opening into the vault was of iron, very strong, and closing with a spring lock. In front of this door, and entirely concealing it, was a large and well-filled book-case, which the judge now moved aside in order to show the secure hiding place.

“ No one knows the existence of this vault save myself and family,” said he. “ I have never allowed the servants to meddle with the library furniture. But I was really very much annoyed the other day by Mrs. Fielding's carelessness. We have needed a new carpet in this room for some time ; and a few days ago, while I was at my office, she sent for a man to come and measure the room for it. I came home and found

him here,— a rascally looking fellow, I thought ; I politely ordered him to leave the house, telling Mrs. Fielding I would finish that job myself. I don't suppose he noticed the vault door ; but if he did, the secrecy of the affair would lead him to suspect what it was placed there for. It was very careless in Mrs. Fielding, very," grumbled the judge.

The following day Barron brought the papers, and a few other things which he treasured ; and placing them in the vault, bade them good-bye for a week.

Shortly after his departure, Hugh Fielding came home from college, for the holidays. He was a genial, frank young fellow — fine looking, and as good as he was handsome.

His mother, looking at him proudly, pronounced upon him a verdict of "perfection," in her own opinion, at least, and remarked with calm dignity, that Hugh was a thorough Seymour.

But flattery did not seem dangerous to this youth, whose impulsive heart was as true and brave as ever beat.

He had none of the nondescript, silly ways that cling to most college students, making them

so much alike, and reducing them from the dignity of individual characters to mere units of a class—that neither a very brilliant or agreeable one.

Hugh was delighted with his western cousin ; he took great pains to please and entertain her. He was fond of music, and one evening invited Katherine and his sisters to hear a famous violinist. Sarah and Lottie happened to be engaged, having accepted invitations to a grand reception at the house of a lady who stood high in the ranks of fashion and wealth.

“You must go alone, Hugh,” said Lottie. “I would not miss Mrs. Leigh’s reception for all the famous violinists in the world.”

“I shall not go, then, for I should not enjoy it much alone,” he said.

“I will go with you, Hugh,” said Katherine.

“But,” urged Lottie, “you are going to the reception with us.”

“Well, you can give them some excuse ; I shall never be missed,” was the answer.

“The music will well repay your giving up one of those tiresome, crowded affairs,” said

Hugh, pleased at the prospect of having Katherine's company.

It was a delightful affair to a lover of music ; and, although the evening had seemed short, they found the house dark and the servants gone to bed when they returned. Judge Fielding and the other members of the family were yet absent.

Hugh unlocked the door with his night-key, telling Katherine she had better retire immediately as it was late ; he said good-night and went to his room to study an hour before retiring.

Katherine started to go to her room, but, as she passed the door of the library saw it was ajar, and a gleam of light crossed the floor at her feet. Supposing there must be a bright fire in the grate, she stepped into the room, intending to sit and dream a while by the fire-light, and enjoy the luxury of being alone. Much to her surprise and disappointment, the fire was out — only a mass of black coals.

She stood for a moment, wondering whence had come the gleam of light in the hall. The moonlight streamed into the room through one window ; the other blind being drawn, left a portion of the apartment in deep shadow.

"It must have been the moonlight," she said softly to herself; and, as the room was chilly, started to retire, when the faint line of light seemed to shine out from the hitherto dark corner.

Her eyes being now more accustomed to the darkness, she noticed that the book-case had been moved from its place, and that the vault door was partly open. The real state of the case flashed upon her at once. There was a burglar in the vault, and the ray of light came from his lantern.

He had heard her enter and was lurking there, doubtless, hoping she would not notice him. One little ray of light betrayed him.

For a moment the frightened girl's heart seemed to cease beating, and then gave a great throb of pity for the poor wretch who was hidden in the vault, trembling, no doubt, far more than even herself; but next came the thought of duty toward those who would suffer from his villainy.

"I must not let him carry off uncle's papers," she thought; and then the thought of Barron's came to her mind, with his remark concerning their value to him. She remembered his pale, tired face, and pictured the look of bitter disappointment when he should find that, in one short

night, he had been robbed of his four years research. She resolved to let justice triumph, instead of pity or fear.

She stood quietly, while these thoughts were coursing through her mind. Now, in pursuance of a plan, she yawned as though sleepy, and coughing slightly, walked to the book-case, thinking what course it was best to take.

She might walk quietly out of the room, pretending she had not noticed any thing, then run up stairs and tell Hugh; but while she was absent the man might secure his prize and escape. Then, too, if he should injure or remove the papers, there would be an irreparable loss to Barron, besides the money and valuables of those who had treated her so kindly. No, the risk was too great. The man would doubtless be alarmed, and make his escape as soon as she left the room. Suddenly it occurred to her that the door of the vault, if closed from the outside, would lock itself. She took a book from the case, and walked to the window, as if to examine it by the moonlight. The door of the vault was about four steps from this window. How could she ever take those steps without letting the robber know

her intentions? It was a desperate thing to do, but her nerves were wrought to the highest tension. She gathered up her dress closely, that its rustling might not betray her. Two long, gliding steps over the carpet—she was at the half-opened vault door. Then, with one quick bound, she threw herself against it, closing it with a slam that shook the book-case violently, and echoed through the house. He was safely caged. Then, there came the reaction. Half falling upon a sofa, she lay, trembling, weak and exhausted. The noise brought Hugh bounding down stairs. He rushed into the library, and, seeing her lie so white and still, supposed she had been taken suddenly ill, though this did not account for the noise he had heard. Seeing that she lay very quietly and did not speak, he bent anxiously over her, his handsome face almost as pale as her own.

“What was it, darling? tell me!” he murmured tenderly. She did not speak or stir. He rang the bell violently, and, taking her small, white hands in his own, tried to warm them.

In that brief space of time, he found that he loved her madly.

She opened her eyes at last, and seemed, even

at this moment, to guess his feelings. Slowly she arose, and, pointing toward the vault, said :

“ Oh, Hugh, there is a man in the vault.”

“ A man in the vault ? ” he echoed ; “ why, child, you are dreaming. No one could have got into the vault, for father locked the door and took the key with him this evening. How could a man get in there ? ”

“ Hugh, I tell you there is a man in there—a burglar. I saw him and shut the door ; he is locked in. Oh ! if he should be smothered, his death would lie at my door.”

He saw she was in earnest now, and his puzzled look gave way to one of admiration for her courage.

Taking her in his strong arms as easily as if she were a child, he carried her up stairs, far away from any thing that could remind her of her adventure. As the ringing of the bell had aroused the servants, he left her under the care of the bewildered and frightened chamber-maid, merely saying that Miss Katherine had been taken suddenly ill. Going to his room, he took a brace of pistols from their case, and prepared to go down to encounter the daring

man who caused all this commotion. Katherine heard him leave his room, and, coming out, met him in the hall.

“Hugh,” she said breathlessly, “please send for a policeman. I am sure that man will smother, if you don’t let him out soon.”

“I don’t need a policeman. I will attend to his lordship myself,” he answered gayly. “When a little girl like you can corner a New York burglar, doubtless a desperate one too, I deem myself able to take care of him after he is safely trapped. Go back to your room, my cousin, and leave the rest to me!”

At this moment the sound of carriage-wheels was heard, and a moment later there was a bustle in the hall. The rest of the family had returned home, and, meeting Hugh at the head of the stairs, an explanation took place. Hugh was in favor of letting the man out immediately, and then marching him off to a police station; but Mrs. Fielding, who was much frightened, would not listen to the proposal for a moment.

“You will surely be hurt if you attempt such a thing,” she said, “for, no doubt, he is desperate, and as well armed as yourself.”

A policeman soon appeared, and Judge Fielding and Hugh went with him to the vault. "He must have had a duplicate key to get into this vault," said the Judge. "I presume that rascally-looking fellow who was measuring the room for a carpet, was an accomplice."

They opened the heavily-swinging door, and found a stout man, with a bushy, black beard, crouching in the corner, nearly smothered, and very glad to get out.

"You are a brave girl, Katherine," said the Judge earnestly; "and we all feel very grateful to you."

"Brave?" cried Hugh; "why, father, I call it heroic; and I only hope she will not be seriously ill from the terrible shock her nervous system has received."

The next day Katherine felt weak and tired, so they made her stay in her room, while the girls petted and praised her. Hugh brought, as his offering, a bouquet of the rarest and loveliest flowers. Her uncle presented her with a set of cameos.

Upon examining the safe, they found that several holes had been drilled in it.

"In ten minutes more, he would have secured what he was after; and I would not have had Barron's papers destroyed or injured for ten thousand dollars, to say nothing of my own property," said the Judge.

Katherine thought of Barron's tired face, and his four years of labor, the result of which she had saved for him, and thanked God in her heart that He had given her courage and strength to do her duty.

CHAPTER X.

A MANAGING MOTHER.

"And my love lieth deep —
Too deep for swift telling."

A few days after the attempted burglary, Barron returned to New York, and called at Judge Fielding's. Hugh told him of Katherine's heroism, and showed a pardonable pride in his cousin. The caller listened to the glowing description quietly, then thanked her in a few formal words for the service she had rendered him. She was disappointed and hurt at the cool dignity of his manner. Woman-like, she tried to hide it. She listened to Hugh's conversation with so much apparent interest, that he was delighted. However, when Mr. Barron asked her to sing, she wished to be excused.

After Barron left, Hugh burst forth indignantly about his seeming ingratitude and lack of appreciation.

"I presume Mr. Barron is an admirer of deli-

cacy and timidity in women," said Mrs. Fielding, looking at Sarah, who was bending industriously over her embroidery.

"All sensible men admire delicacy in a woman," answered Hugh; "but timidity is quite another thing. I can not see why a brave act in a woman is not worthy of more praise than in a man. Barron must be deucedly stupid, if he can not see and admire the wonderful courage it required to slam the vault door on that fellow."

"And faint afterward," said Katherine, gayly.

"That was the finest thing about it, according to mother's theory—being an evidence of your womanly weakness and delicacy. I suppose if you had fainted at the sight of a mouse running through the room, you would have shown yourself still more worthy of admiration."

"Hugh," said Mrs. Fielding, "Katherine needs not your championship, for we all appreciate the—the presence of mind she showed on such a trying occasion. I am sure you have no reason to complain of Mr. Barron's manner toward her. He thanked her, and what more could you ask? He is not an enthusiastic man." *

"Oh, it was nothing," said Katherine, trying

to turn the conversation. "It was only what any one of you would have done, had you been in my place."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Fielding. "You must not let Hugh spoil you with his flattery, my dear."

That remark about womanly delicacy troubled Katherine far more than she would admit. "I wonder if he does think me strong-nerved and masculine, because I acted as I did?" she said to herself a hundred times. "Oh, if he only knew how frightened I was, and that it was the thought of him, after all, which gave me courage, he surely would not think me unwomanly." And so she let this thought rankle in her bosom until it destroyed all pleasure.

One day Mr. Barron called. Mrs. Fielding and her daughters were shopping, so Katherine received him alone. After talking with her a few minutes very pleasantly, he took a small package from his pocket. Coming to her side, he said:

"You have thought me ungrateful. Now confess that you have."

She made no answer. He continued:

"I want to explain my strange conduct. The

truth is, that evening when they were telling me of your brave action, I was so completely absorbed in admiration, that I could not think of words to express my feelings.

"It was stupid in me, I know; but when the heart is full, the lips are often silent. When any strong emotion sweeps over my soul, it deprives me of the power of speech. Now, that I can think and talk calmly about the matter, I want to thank you for the great service you did me; and I beg you to accept this slight token of my gratitude. This ring was my mother's. She was a noble woman, one who would have appreciated you, were she living to day."

The ring was a slender circle of gold, with a medium-sized, beautiful diamond, in a quaint, old-fashioned setting. It was very odd, and drew from Katherine an exclamation of admiration, as she held it before her.

"Oh, Mr. Barron!" she cried, "I can not accept so precious a gift for simply doing my duty."

The offering lifted a burden off her heart. Now, she was sure he did not think her unwomanly.

He appeared not to notice her last remark. Bending over her, he gently placed the ring upon the first finger of the left hand.

There was a flush on his dark face—a light in his brown eyes, that betrayed a deeper feeling than gratitude. She did not notice it. She had placed him so high in her imagination—so far above herself, that she failed to see what a girl with more experience and less humility would have known at once.

She was so proud of his praise, so happy to know that he did not think her courage the result of a masculine nature! But there came a sudden cloud over her bright face, at the thought of her aunt's probable displeasure. She foresaw trouble should she accept the ring.

Barron had been watching her expressive face, and saw the shadows that gathered so suddenly.

She drew the ring slowly from her finger, and told him sadly that, while she thanked him for his kindness, and would have valued the ring very highly for the sake of the one who had worn it, still, she could not accept it.

“Why not?” he asked, looking at her keenly.

"I can not tell," she answered confusedly and trembling; "but, really, I must not accept it."

"Tell me, Katherine," he said, forgetting in his earnestness all formality. "Is there any one whom you love, to whom you would think yourself disloyal if you accepted my gift?"

"No, no; it is not that!" she answered eagerly.

"Then you will wear it as a token of my gratitude, will you not?" he said pleadingly.

He saw her confusion, and thinking she had noticed his lover-like manner toward her, but did not wish to abandon herself wholly to this new feeling, he sought to calm her by offering the gift as an expression of gratitude only.

"Oh, yes! I know you only meant it as a token of friendship," she said.

"Well, then, please wear it."

He placed it upon her finger.

Just then Mrs. Fielding came into the room. Seeing the two alone, and apparently enjoying each other's society, her face flushed with vexation. Barron left soon after, and Mrs. Fielding caught sight of the ring Katherine wore.

"Where did you get that beautiful ring?" she inquired, her voice trembling slightly.

Katherine answered that Mr. Barron had given it to her, as expressive of his gratitude for her service in saving his valuable papers.

"Why, Katherine!" said Mrs. Fielding, angrily; "one would think you were the only woman who had ever done her duty, to hear the fuss they make over you. I am surprised at you, Katherine Seymour! You did wrong in accepting such a present from Mr. Barron."

"I told him I did not wish to accept it," replied Katherine, meekly.

"Well, all you need do, then, is to send it back. He will respect you far more for doing so."

"Do you really think so, aunt?"

"Of course; but, tell me, child, what was he saying to you when I came in?"

"Nothing very much."

"Nonsense! He was talking earnestly. He was not making love to you, I hope?"

"Oh, no, indeed."

"I am glad to hear it. I should regret to think Hartley Barron so lacking in principle as to make love to Sarah's cousin."

“Why, aunt! is he engaged to Sarah?”

“Just about the same as engaged. He goes everywhere with her, and comes here almost daily. Any one with eyes would see that he loves her. I presume he gave you the ring partly because you are her cousin, and in our family. I notice he is very kind to you and Lottie lately. You had better send him a polite note immediately, saying you can not accept so valuable a gift for a mere act of involuntary bravery. Now, go, my dear! You will have time before dinner.”

Katherine went to her room, and wrote the following note:

MR. BARRON:

I write this to say I can not accept the ring you kindly gave me this afternoon, as a token of your friendship and gratitude. I thank you for your kind appreciation, just the same as if I could keep it, and hope you will excuse me in not returning it when you were here, instead of sending it now.

Hoping you will believe that I fully appreciate the rare gift, although I can not accept it, I remain

Most Respectfully and Sincerely,

KATHERINE SEYMOUR.

After looking longingly at the ring, and sighing at her aunt's hard sentence, she folded

and addressed the note, and sent both to Mr. Barron.

A few hours later he received the ring. He read the note over carefully, coloring with offended pride. Then he grew curious; there seemed something so singular in the manner in which she had acted.

"Can it be possible," he thought, "that she loves somebody else, toward whom she fears being disloyal in any way? No! It can not be! She told me there was no one. Why does she act so? Perhaps she dislikes me. I must have seemed cold and ungrateful that evening; but my heart was too full of admiration, and — yes, love for her — to allow me to speak." And then the strong man tortured himself for a time, by conjecturing what the obstacle might be which would not permit the girl he loved with all his soul, to accept his present, offered in friendship.

His anxiety only increased his love. He determined to seek an interview, and tell her all. Then, he would ask why she could not wear his ring. The real cause for sending it back never occurred to him. Although a spirited man, he was free from petty vanity regarding women.

Wrapped in this mantle of unconsciousness, he had passed through life without noticing that match-making mothers smiled approvingly upon him.

He had never loved before. There was an innocent freshness about Katherine that interested him at first; and, as he watched her, and saw the beauty of her character, this interest had ripened into love, intense and irresistible.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STOLEN LETTER.

"The little rift within the lover's lute."

Barron had fully determined to tell Katherine his love, and was tormented by the fear that she was not free.

"If she is free," he thought, "I must and will win her. Surely, love like mine can not be in vain."

Katherine now found her position at Judge Fielding's uncomfortable. She was treated with marked coolness by her aunt. Hugh, who had heard of the ring, grew moody, acting quite unlike his old, cheery self. He had not alluded to his love for her since the attempted burglary, and she anxiously avoided all mention of the half-confession he had made that night.

She deeply regretted the circumstance, and would have forgotten it gladly had not his transparent jealousy given proof that he remembered it too well.

At last he found an opportunity to speak. "I have loved you, Katherine, since I first saw you, I think; if you can not return my love, I shall keep on loving you just the same. I can not help it."

She was deeply pained at the turn affairs had taken. She loved her cousin in a sisterly way. She kindly, but firmly, told him her feelings. She hoped she should always have a deep affection for him as a cousin, but she could not return the love he wished.

His pleasant face grew dark as he listened. "I see how it is,—you love this Mr. Barron," he said.

"Hugh, you talk wildly. Mr. Barron does not want me to love him. He only gave me that ring because I saved those papers; and I have sent it back. So you see how mistaken you are."

"He loves you, Katherine, I know. He will tell you so some day. Mark my words! and when he does, you will not answer him as you have answered me."

She thought nothing of his words; she attributed them to jealousy. Besides, had not aunt told her that Sarah and Barron were nearly the same as engaged? When the latter called, as he

did frequently, watching for an opportunity to see and speak with Katherine alone, she was careful to avoid him. She did not wish to interfere with lovers. Mrs. Fielding comprehended the true situation; and, although she had a sincere interest in the welfare of her niece, determined to arrange for her departure from the city soon. "And then," she said to herself, "when she is out of the way, he will come back to Sarah. This is only a fancy; and I owe my first duty to my child."

She wrote a long letter to her sister, Mrs. Dr. Reed, which soon resulted in a pressing invitation for Katherine to visit the latter, in her country home at Hillsdale.

"Lenore," wrote Mrs. Reed, "is just recovering from an illness which has left her nervous system prostrated, and she is very low-spirited. The doctor thinks Katherine's company would cheer her wonderfully. I suppose Hugh will return to college, soon, the holidays being over. Katherine might come to Garrettsville with him, and the doctor or myself would meet her there."

"Well, Kathie," said Mrs. Fielding, as she read the letter to her one morning, "what do you

think of your Aunt Emily's invitation ? I am sure you would have a nice time at Hillsdale ; and you are looking a little pale, lately. I don't think the city air agrees with you ; you will brighten up wonderfully when you get to Hillsdale. The scenery around there is beautiful in Summer, and Lenore is such a dear girl ; you will be very happy."

Thus kindly, but decidedly, was Katherine informed that the correct thing for her to do was to go to Hillsdale ; and also to express an impatient desire to go soon.

"When will Hugh return to college?" she asked, quietly.

"I think he ought to go on Monday. He has idled away too much time already." Thus it was settled that they should go on the following Monday. It was now Thursday.

Katherine wandered sadly around the house where she had spent so many happy hours. It was her nature to become attached to places as well as people. She had been very happy in New York, notwithstanding her aunt's recent displeasure. Now that she was about to leave, every body seemed kind to her. Mrs. Fielding even reproached her-

self a little for her previous coldness, and tried, by unusual cordiality, to efface unpleasant memories.

At last Sunday came, and Barron called in the evening. He had been unusually busy during the week, and, not calling, knew nothing of Katherine's near departure. The first intimation came from Lottie:

"You must come and see us often now, for we shall be dreadfully blue and lonely. Hugh and Katherine are going away at the same time, you know."

"Where is Miss Seymour going?" he said, growing pale in spite of self-control.

"Oh, to Hillsdale—a lonesome, dreary old place it is in Winter, I assure you," was Lottie's careless reply. She had not observed his sudden pallor. Mrs. Fielding had, and readily divined its cause.

"I have done wisely," thought that excellent lady, "in getting so dangerous a girl out of the way. She must be an artful creature, to get Hartley Barron so infatuated that he pales at mention of her departure."

Barron cursed his folly in not obtaining an

interview with Katherine. He had anxiously sought one soon after his ring was returned, but Mrs. Fielding always managed to thwart his wish, in her quiet, well-bred way. He did not see this, and blamed himself for lack of persistency.

He had written several notes to Katherine, requesting an interview, but destroyed them; they seemed so formal. At last, he determined to trust to chance for an opportunity to speak with her alone. Now, she was going away, without knowing how devotedly he loved her. The news of her departure completely unnerved him. It was slow torture to be forced to keep up an appearance of polite interest in Mrs. Fielding's conversation. His thoughts were upon the girl he loved.

"What shall I do?" he thought. "I can not let her leave New York, without telling her of my feelings. I will write her a letter this very evening. The train leaves at ten. She will get my letter early to-morrow morning, if sent by a messenger, and she can write a word in reply.

Having made this resolve, he felt more at ease. "I shall soon know my fate," he thought. There

was a look upon Katherine's sweet face, as her eyes met his that evening, which made him fancy it would not be a sorrowful one.

"Do sing for us, Mr. Barron," urged Mrs. Fielding; but it required more resolution than Hartley cared to exert. His heart was full of sorrow at parting with Katherine, and he had no little anxiety as to what might be the answer to his suit. Had he been less noble, he might have reasoned that a dependent young lady, with only a pretty face and a tender heart for dowry, would not fail to accept his suit. He had always been confident in his undertakings; and, with good reason, for his star had been in the ascendant; but this, he told himself, was a very different affair from any other in which he had been engaged. He loved deeply, with all the passion and strength of manhood, and the purity and ideality of youth. In his eyes, Katherine was the flower of all womanhood; and hitherto-unknown feelings sprang into life, at her touch or glance.

Boy-like, he longed for an opportunity to show his devotion, by periling life for her, if needs be.

“She is far too lovely for me,” he thought; “yet, I am not totally unworthy of her. Could I win her, I should love her as wife was never loved before.”

He thought if Katherine would only sing, he might turn the leaves of her music, and thus be near her. He asked her to favor them with a song. Mrs. Fielding gave her a warning look, and said something about a bad cold, and how much she would like a duet. But there was so much earnestness in Barron’s appeal, that Katherine took her seat at the piano. He stood at her side, waiting to turn the music.

It was the first time he had ever paid her such marked attention. Hugh always arranged to rob him of the privilege.

In looking over the music, for a song they wanted, their hands accidentally touched. It made Katherine tremble, and sent the blood bounding through her veins. For a moment she grew faint! Surely, it could not be the simple touch of her cousin’s betrothed lover! Was she so weak? That her regard for Barron was different from any she had ever known before, was evident. She felt as if she were in a dream. What

strange, resistless feeling swept over her to-night, as Barron touched her hand. "Do I love him? Do I love him?" she involuntarily asked herself, and there was a feeling of pride in the questioning. She thought him worthy her love—the noblest among men.

Then, with anguish came the thought: "He loves another—I must learn to forget him. I have no right to think of him as I do. I must conquer myself. I will begin this very night."

Katherine had not been without admirers; but, unsophisticated, poetical and dreamy, as she was, none had touched the heart. Barron was the first who had roused her deeper nature.

She trembled as she sat at the piano. If she could only check this agitation. They would all notice it, and read her thoughts. Her heart fluttered like a caged wild bird. Oh! if she could steal away from the gaze of all!

"Katherine," said Mrs. Fielding, "you seem to be waiting a long time. Why don't you sing?"

Without thinking, she began Jean Ingelow's most touching song, "Oh, fair Dove! Oh, fond

Dove!" At last she came to that verse, the very sigh of a broken heart:—

"Oh, first love! Oh, last love!
My love with the true, true heart!
To think I have come to this, your home;
And yet we are apart."

The thought, that to-morrow would find her far away from the man she loved, nearly overcame her; for a moment her voice faltered, giving an added pathos to the sad, sweet words. Mrs. Fielding called this artfulness, and flushed angrily; but the eloquent sadness in the singer's voice gave Barron a thrill of happiness he had never known before.

"Can it be that she feels sadly at parting?" he thought. "Ah, yes, my little love! I have a 'true, true heart,' and it beats for you alone; nor will it be calm until I feel sure that you are all my own."

The song was finished; Katherine, pale and miserable, asked to be excused, she was too ill to talk; and feared lest her extreme nervousness might betray her feelings.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fielding, quickly, "you had

better retire early. You have a long, cold journey before you to-morrow."

"Well, then, I suppose I must bid you good-bye," said Barron.

She gave him her hand. He took the small, cold fingers lightly in his own, and held them but a moment. He fain would have clasped her to his bosom; but, with enforced coolness, he smiled, wished her a pleasant journey, and said "good-bye." Mrs. Fielding had watched him keenly all the while.

"Good-bye," echoed Katherine, faintly; and then gained the hall door, she scarcely knew how. She dragged herself up stairs, feeling so crushed and lonely. Once in her own room, restraint was past, and throwing herself upon the bed, she wept bitterly.

"Oh, my own love!" she murmured, "you are my own! No one can love you as I do! Why are we thus parted? Why am I so lonely?"

Long did she wrestle with her anguish. The intensity of her own nature was revealed to her for the first time. Little did she think the man she loved so deeply was also keeping love's vigils the long night through. When the dawn came

Barron sent a boy to Judge Fielding's with a note for Katherine.

Katherine had fallen into a restless sleep toward morning, and when Mrs. Fielding entered the room she noticed her paleness and tear-stained face. Mrs. Fielding was smitten with momentary remorse; and after looking at the sleeper for a moment, stole quietly out of the room, thinking she would not disturb her, as it was yet early.

She had just descended from the room, and was in the hall, when a boy came with Mr. Barron's letter. She took it, telling him she would hand it to Miss Seymour.

Glancing at the address, curiously, she saw it was Mr. Barron's hand-writing. A look of wrath came over her face.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Fielding to herself, "if Miss Katherine Seymour can receive love-letters from Mr. Barron, and in my house, too, it is quite time that I looked into the matter. She is only a child; why should I not read this letter, if I choose? Then, if it is best that she should have it, I can give it to her. Really, my duty to my poor Sarah requires me to read it."

Going to her room, she carefully locked the

door; although she told herself she was only doing her duty, she did not wish to be surprised.

She opened the letter, and, reading it, grew pale, in angry surprise. It spoke his love in eloquent and passionate words, which carried conviction even to Mrs. Fielding's unwilling mind.

He offered Katherine his heart and the devotion of his life.

"My darling," the letter ran, "for I must call you so, write me when you have read this, and tell me if I dare hope for your love. I need not tell you of my suspense until I hear from you. I long to tell you all this, face to face, but have found no opportunity to speak with you alone."

When Mrs. Fielding had read this, her anger nearly choked her. She crushed the letter in her hands, and thrust it into the burning grate.

"Oh, the artful, wicked creature!" she cried, "to come into my house, and win away her cousin's lover, with her smiles and arts. Thank Heaven, she is going this very morning! I only wish I had sent her away before this happened."

She was too angry to think of the cruel wrong she was doing her niece, by burning the letter. And so ends the first act of the drama, "Misun-

derstanding." The little rift was made — the little rift that, slowly growing wider, divides two lives.

When Katherine came down, she saw her aunt's manner was unusually cool toward her; but she was so absorbed in her own sorrow — loving a man who could be nothing to her — that she scarcely noticed it. However, Hugh observed it, and was annoyed at such treatment of his favorite cousin.

"Mother," he said, "you treat Katherine shamefully."

"What!" said Mrs. Fielding, "are you in love with her, too?"

"Yes, I am in love with her, and not in the least ashamed of it," said Hugh sturdily. "Although she refused to listen to me when I told her my feelings, I can not have even you abuse her in my presence, mother!"

"Oh, she understands how to manage men, and, no doubt, has fooled older and wiser ones than you, Hugh."

"Nonsense! She is a true-hearted, lovely girl, not half artful enough to match you and the girls. Don't you suppose I can see why you are

so anxious to hurry her off? But your plans will never work, mother. Hartley Barron will follow her to Hillsdale, if he loves her half as much as I think he does."

"The deceitful creature! I must say you all act like fools about her."

The carriage came, and Katherine and Hugh were driven rapidly away. She was pale and quiet, while Hugh was in the gayest spirits over the prospect of their journey.

The "good-byes" had been quickly said, and Katherine gazed through a mist of tears, toward the house where she had spent so many happy hours.

CHAPTER XII.

INDECISION.

"In the greenest of our valleys."

The three charming villages of Hillsdale lie scattered along one of the most beautiful valleys of New England. Dr. Reed's house is in Hillsdale proper. The large hotel is at the little watering-place, Hillsdale Springs. East Hillsdale, a small hamlet, has a store and postoffice. They nestle at the foot of high and rugged hills, which shut out the noisy world from the peaceful vale.

Katherine is sitting upon the piazza of her uncle's house, watching the mists float far away over the valleys. Nature's smiling face has been freshened by a shower during the night, but the morning's golden sunlight has kissed the rain-drops from the buds and flowers. The pebbled walks were dry again.

Dr. Reed's house is a large, old-fashioned mansion, well back from the highway, almost con-

cealed by the tall maple trees which shade the lawn and croquet grounds. They are delightfully cool on hot Summer days. The broad piazza is supported by heavy pillars. From the piazza the view is very fine. It takes in a long range of hills, covered with a noble growth of pines, and, in the far-away, misty distance, a grand old mountain. You also get a glimpse of the white curling road that winds round the mountain. Down the hillside lies Garrettville, a college town, ten miles distant.

At one side of the house, and a little back from the lawn, there is an old-fashioned garden, where all kinds of sweet, familiar flowers perfume the air, and gladden the eyes. There are carnations and clove-pinks; tiger-lilies and their stately white sisters; roses, and poppies enough to send an army to sleep. Here, too, are larkspurs, the sweet mignonette, pansies and African marigolds, with their golden hearts and strong, rich fragrance, suggestive of barbaric, dusky princesses and tropical skies.

Just beyond the garden is a lonesome little grove, the favorite haunt of the whip-poor-will. At night, when the sun goes down, and the even-

ing star peeps slyly over the hill-crest, he begins pouring out his sorrow. Katherine's window overlooks both garden and grove; Summer nights it is her favorite custom to sit by it late, listening to the whip-poor-will, half imagining he knows her heart-ache, and is sorrowing with her sorrow.

The scenery around Hillsdale is so new to her, and its wildness so much akin to her own deep nature, that the days pass rapidly. But at times her half-admitted love irresistibly overcomes her, and the instinct which drives a poor wounded bird to solitude, takes her away on long, lonely rambles.

The voice of the dark, ever-sighing pines, is fraught with comfort and sympathy. The brook's murmur is music to her ear, and the twittering birds so many messengers from him whom she loves. But her restless heart was not satisfied. Sometimes the desire to see him again tempts her to return to the city and seek some humble employment, that she may be near him. But again, her womanly, honest pride, so strong an element of her nature, asserts itself. She feels, reluctantly, that of all men, her cousin's lover can

be nothing to her. "Probably he has forgotten the fact of my existence, by this time," she says to herself. The Summer is wearing away, and she is fighting the old, old battle between love and pride. Which will conquer?

Mrs. Reed is a kind-hearted woman, very fond of her plants and her home. Her daughter Lenore is a sweet-tempered girl, rather sentimental; she loves Katherine as a sister. Dr. Reed is a hard-working country physician, too much absorbed in the care of his numerous patients to notice much at home.

"The Maples"—the name of the manor—is a very hospitable home; and Mrs. Reed is best pleased when her house is filled with young people. "This is 'Liberty Hall,'" she often said; "just do as you please, and make yourself at home; only don't expect me to entertain you. I leave all that to Katherine and Lenore."

The result is, the students at Garrettville deem it an especial favor to be invited to "The Maples." A member of the Senior class is just now enjoying the privilege. He has been out in the garden with Mrs. Reed this morning, apparently looking at the flowers. A keen observer would notice

that his eyes wandered often toward the pensive figure on the piazza. He scarcely heard a word of the motherly lecture Mrs. Reed has been giving him about the injurious habit of smoking.

At last he finds some slight excuse to get away, and saunters slowly down the garden walk, around the corner of the piazza, apparently intent upon the fine view of the hills.

"What a morning it is! Miss Seymour," he says, taking a seat near her. "There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier than all the valleys of Ionian hills!"

"Yes, we are quite proud of our valley; but wait until you visit Winding Brook; you never have visited the place, I think, Mr. Challoner?"

"No! I have heard much of it, though. Mrs. Reed was saying something about our going there this afternoon, and I am sure we could not ask a fairer day to make the trip."

"You will have more climbing than you may enjoy; for the best view of the cascade, we must scramble up the steepest hill there is for miles around."

"All the better, then," says Mr. Challoner. "It will take the place of my gymnasium exerci-

ses. Of course you will find climbing tiresome work, you have so few hills in the west; you must not hesitate to accept my assistance, for I am quite a mountaineer. You don't believe one word I am saying, I see by your looks."

"Oh, I don't doubt you at all; but the truth is, Mr. Challoner, I have some letters to write, and had thought of staying at home. There will be no necessity for my going; you will have Hugh and Lenore for guides, you know."

"You are a cruel young lady, and only seeking an excuse to avoid my company."

"No, indeed, it is not that, I assure you; I really have some letters that require answering."

"Very well! I, too, have letters to write, and think I will not go to-day."

"If you are going to be disappointed, Mr. Challoner, I will go; but I shall be very dull company, as my mind will be on my letters."

"I don't want to annoy you, or urge you to go against your will; but you know, very well, I should not enjoy one moment of the time if you were not there."

"Should you not, Mr. Challoner? I am sorry."

“Why are you sorry? I should be glad to hear that you sometimes miss me.”

At this point she hears some one calling her, and not waiting to answer his question, leaves him to guess why she regrets he places so high an estimate upon her companionship. Indeed, it would have troubled her to answer the question herself.

Frank Challoner is young, proud, talented, and strikingly handsome in person. Added to these attractions, he is the only male descendant of an old and wealthy Southern family. He is an intimate friend of Hugh Fielding; has been much at Dr. Reed's; and, with each visit, finds the place more agreeable. Katherine is more discerning in such matters since the struggle with her cousin's betrothed. She knows Frank Challoner admires her, and may be only waiting an opportunity to declare his love.

“Any woman might well be proud of such a love,” she says to herself. Yet, can Katherine reciprocate, or give him aught than a quite decided “No?”

CHAPTER XIII.

WINDING BROOK.

"The racing river leaped and sang
Full blithely, in the perfect weather ;
All 'round the mountain echoes rang ;
For blue and green were glad together."

Why must Katherine waste her young life in grieving over the fatal past? Brooding about the man whose looks so plainly said, "I love you," while his hand was pledged to her cousin. She must quench this foolish desire, or it will consume her; yet she can not give herself to another.

Time, oh! time, must solve the mystery of her heart.

Early in the afternoon they started for "Winding Brook;" Lenore and Hugh, Katherine and Mr. Challoner. The latter, sitting beside Katherine, talks constantly in a low, caressing voice, on subjects intended only for her ear.

She looks very lovely; the pure air and fresh breeze bringing variable colors to her soft cheeks.

Admiration of the beautiful scenery in the glen through which they ride, lights her dark eyes with a wonderful glory. On every side myriads of mosses, ferns, and delicate wood-flowers, met the eye, and the faint scent of newly mown grass perfumes the air. It is the rosy month of June!

“When flowers bloom and hay is down,
And each shepherd woos his dear.”

“What a lovely cluster of purple blossoms!” cries Katherine; “please get them for me, Hugh.”

But Challoner’s love made him the most nimble-footed; he returns with them to the carriage, and is a long time fastening them in Katherine’s heavy brown braids. They soon arrive at the foot of the hills; alighting, tie the horses, as there is only a foot-path leading to the cascade, the chief beauty of “Winding Brook.” Challoner gives his arm to Katherine, and they climb slowly up.

The little mountain rill has increased to a torrent, by last night’s rain, and is foaming and tumbling along over its pebbly bed, with a roaring sound, heard long before you come in sight of the stream.

"Here it is," says Hugh, who is a few steps in advance; and then the beautiful cascade is before them.

The winding stream rises among the high hills, gathering force as it courses down its way, and with a loud roar, tumbles over the precipice where they stand.

Delicate ferns grow among the depths of the gray old rocks over-hanging the water, and their exquisite shades of green are kept fresh by the ever-falling spray. A few rays of sunshine, struggling through the dense shade, fall upon the rich green carpet of moss.

Katherine and Lenore seat themselves upon the rocks, and gaze upon the charming scene in silence. Challoner has removed his broad-brimmed Panama, and leaning against a tree near by shows to advantage his lithe, graceful form, by his careless attitude. Some men look lazy when they lounge, but there is something so spirited about this young scholar, so expressive of eager youth, that even in repose he looks full of life. He has dark, Southern eyes, clearly cut features, mobile pale face; his physique is superb. The clear ivory tint of his cheeks denotes the student who "burns

the midnight oil." "He has the most brilliant mind in college," Hugh declares.

The grandeur of the scene hushed all tongues for a time. At last, Challoner, who has a poetical sensibility nearly akin to genius, could not refrain from repeating a few lines of a favorite poet.

"Oh!" cried Hugh in mock distress, "if you and Kathie are going to quote poetry, Lenore and myself, poor prosaic mortals, will retire. Not one intelligible word shall we get from either of you while in that mood. Lenore, let us go and wait at respectful distance till this poetic frenzy abates. One might as well go under the fall and be deluged with water, as to remain and be deluged with poetry. A veritable Noah's flood it will be, old fellow, when you and cousin get started. Don't let me disturb you. Quote away, children! Lenore, we are too practical to appreciate half these fine things; we will gather some flowers, and refresh our memories on the noble science of botany."

"We will go with you, Hugh," says Katherine, who, for reasons of her own, did not wish to be alone with Challoner. She knew he was only awaiting a favorable opportunity to tell his love;

and, while there is much in him to admire, she dreads taking any decided step, which an avowal of this love would render necessary.

His companionship has been much to her lately. His conversation, always interesting, has often led her thoughts away from brooding over her loneliness. Now, at the possibility of losing his friendship, she sees that his companionship is more to her than she had realized. The thought that a talented, manly young man cares for her, if Barron does not, has soothed her wounded pride more than she would have deemed possible a few months earlier. She does not really love him, for all that. Therefore she anxiously avoids a declaration.

She arises from her seat, and keeps near Hugh and Lenore, who are a few paces in advance. They walked down the steep hillside, below the noisy cataract. Here the water ripples slowly over the mossy stones, and the sun falls brightly all around. The banks are rich with flowers, and the place, although very beautiful, is quite different from their first stopping-place.

"Do let us stay here awhile," says Lenore, "this is such a nice seat."

"Well, you can stay here with Challoner and Katherine, if you have no taste for botany," answered Hugh. "For my part, I want to carry home some creeping fern. They say it grows about here, and my collection of ferns is very meager."

"I will stay here," says Lenore. So she lingers until Katherine and Challoner come up. Hugh is out of sight.

They seat themselves upon a fallen tree, and chat idly.

"I have been thinking," says Katherine, as she watches the flowing waters at her feet, "of a passage in Childe Harold, and I am afraid it will haunt me, if I do not repeat it.

"The rill runs o'er, and round,
Fern flowers and ivy creep, fantastically tangled.
The green hills are clothed with early blossoms,
Through the grass, the quick-eyed lizard rustles ;
And the bills of Summer birds sing welcome as ye pass.
Flowers, fresh in hue, and many in their class,
Implore the pausing step, and with their dyes
Dance in the soft breeze, in a fairy mass,
The sweetness of the violet's deep blue eyes,
Kissed by the breath of Heaven, seems colored by its skies."

"An apt quotation, and well repeated," says Lenore.

"Yes," answers Katherine, a trace of bitterness in her tone, "I believe I have a talent for acquiring all the useless accomplishments."

"I hope you don't call your remarkable knowledge of the poets 'a useless accomplishment,' Miss Seymour," said Challoner, quietly. "Nothing which carries the soul, tired and sad, from the harsh realities of a groveling life, into the purer atmosphere of poetry, can be called useless. 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' How true this is! Our better nature lives by all God tells us through the words of His inspired poets, as well as His prophets. Indeed, to me the words of the poets and inspired prophets are manna.

"Poetry, instead of being classed among the useless, should be part of the religion of all earnest souls. I think such a religion would do more to make men nobler and women purer, than all the creeds in Christendom."

Challoner paused, somewhat embarrassed at being betrayed into such an earnest and lengthy speech.

"I must thank you," answered Katherine, glad to have found in him so zealous a champion, "for your eloquent remarks. Rarely do I find

one who sympathizes with me in my great love for poetry. I had began to doubt my own feelings and tastes, lately, and think myself too sentimental to be of any earthly use.

"I have actually regretted reading Shakspeare in my school days, and wished I had studied my 'multiplication table' instead. I would be better fitted to teach young America now. I suppose you know I intend taking the Hillsdale school soon?"

"No! I envy the 'young ideas.' May I inquire why you teach? Northern young ladies think the discipline benefits their minds, I suppose."

Katherine answered frankly: "I don't think any thing of the kind. I select teaching, because it is the only lady-like employment I can find in Hillsdale, and I must have the money it will bring me."

Mr. Challoner smiled at her frank confession of poverty.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL WRONG.

“Was it not Fate, whose name is also Sorrow?”

Frank Challoner's eulogy on poetry frightened Lenore away; and Katherine, in spite of her precaution, suddenly found herself alone with the man who loves her. For a time the murmur of the stream is the only sound that breaks the silence. At last Mr. Challoner slowly drew a case from a pocket very near his heart, containing a miniature. After gazing at it intently for a minute, he hands it to Katherine, who had been watching him curiously, and, must it be confessed, with a little jealousy. It is the portrait of a lovely young girl, apparently very nearly her own age.

“So here, too,” she thought, “is some one before me; while I, vain fool! had been fearing I could not return his love sufficiently to bid him hope. Ah, me! no one will ever love me better

than any one else, unless it be poor Hugh. What a vain, silly fool I have been."

She looks long and admiringly at the picture; she will not let him suspect, for a moment, the nature of her feelings. She returns the picture, and quietly says:

"I congratulate you, Mr. Challoner. She is a remarkably pretty girl."

"Well, yes," he replied, looking at the picture again before returning it to his pocket; "Nellie is pretty, and the best sister in the world. I received this picture last week; she has improved amazingly since I saw her last."

"Your sister! Mr. Challoner?"

"Yes, my only sister. Who did you suppose it was, pray?"

"I did not know — I thought it might be some one else," said Katherine, blushing.

Challoner's eyes grew radiant as he watched her confusion; a sudden joy illumines his face as he tells himself she must care for me, or she would not have been jealous. Almost before she can realize to where all this is sure to lead, he has drawn her to him.

"Katherine, did you think I would carry any

picture but yours or my sister's so near my heart? You would never give me your picture, now I ask for your peerless self."

The strange jealousy she felt a moment before has completely unnerved her; and the reaction is a feeling strongly akin to love.

"Speak to me, Katherine!" he urged. "Do not say you can not love me; I love you better than life. I have loved your beautiful spirit always. I have dreamed there might be a woman on this earth like you. I have tried to live worthily, nobly, for her sake, that if God granted I should ever find her, I need not blush when I asked her hand; and now the lovely reality exceeds my brightest dream."

She can not answer Challoner's passionate appeal.

Challoner is too courtly to press her for a kiss, but he looks wistfully at her exquisite lips.

"My Katherine," pleads Challoner, his handsome clear face turned toward her — "Oh, my darling, can I ever hope to call you wife?"

Katherine's "no" is very faint. He draws

her closer, and ventures a kiss upon her cheek, her eyes, her lips.

On the way home, he has placed a ring upon her finger. She looks at it in dreamy wonder, but makes no attempt to remove it. How far away to her now seems the sorrowful past. She sighs, and thinks it may be better so; but as they ride along the thought about another ring, which was returned to the giver, occupies her mind.

"It was only a token of gratitude, after all," she says to herself, with a sigh. "If it had been a love-offering, no one on earth should have robbed me of the precious token."

And yet, she is not insensible to the devotion of the noble young man at her side, who gazes on her with such worshiping, loving eyes. But there is something lacking in the happiness she experienced when Barron declared his adoration.

At dusk they were home. As Challoner assisted her from the carriage, he lifted her hand reverently to his lips, and pressed a kiss upon the slender fingers. The blood rushed to her face, and she paused a moment before going into the house, lest her aunt should see her confusion.

Challoner watches the opportunity, and asks

to walk with her in the garden a few minutes, after tea.

She promises, and then goes up to her own little room, where she has so often sat, dreaming of her hero. The moon rose slowly from behind the eastern hills, and the whip-poor-will's sad notes reaches her ear. She thinks of Barron now, and, over all, the past; then, of the noble man who has placed his hand and heart at her disposal.

She reasons with herself, and wonders why she is not the happiest girl in the world, with such a lover. She resolves that she will be happy, and accept Challoner as her suitor. She throws herself upon the bed, and weeps long and bitterly. They are the tears of renunciation.

Until now, she has been almost unconsciously clinging to hope. But by her own free act, she now casts aside the slightest chance of ever being more to Barron than a mere friend.

Challoner's ring seems to burn her flesh, and she takes it off impatiently.

"Ah, no!" she says, putting it gently back again, "I will not take it off. He loves me, and Mr. Barron said 'good-bye' as calmly as if I had been the merest stranger."

CHAPTER XV.

LATE, SO LATE.

"Oh, the silence that came next,
The patience, and long waiting."

Barron waited anxiously and long for a reply to his letter. When a week passed, and it did not come, he found the boy by whom he had sent it, and questioned him.

"Did you go directly to Judge Fielding's house?"

"Yes, sir; and I gave the note to a lady, and she said she would give it to Miss Seymour."

"Surely, then, she received my letter," he thought. "I will wait."

Another week passed, and no answer came. At last, with a sense of having been discourteously treated, if not unkindly, he acknowledged to himself that his hopes were in vain. He missed her more and more, as the days dragged by, and his love seemed to grow stronger, if possible. Feel-

ing as he did, it was painful to call at Judge Fielding's, and sit in the room where he had first met Katherine, the room where he had learned to love her, and the room in which they parted. And, although he had a warm regard for Sarah, being constantly reminded of Katherine by these thoughts and associations, it became unbearable, and his visits grew less frequent.

"Do come and see us oftener, dear Mr. Barron," said Mrs. Fielding, in her motherly way, when he called one day, the first time in weeks; "why, you are getting to be quite a stranger among us."

"My time is much occupied just now, Mrs. Fielding," was his answer.

"Oh, you work too hard, Mr. Barron. You look pale; but I suppose you will soon go to the country, and there you will find rest and quiet."

"Really, Mrs. Fielding, I had intended to remain in the city this Summer; but if you are going away, as you doubtless are, I may be tempted to follow you. Have you found out a sylvan retreat, where you can lie under green trees and watch the clouds, undisturbed by hotel gongs or brass bands? If so, please to let me know."

“There is nothing to disturb us but mosquitoes and frogs, where we are going,” said Lottie ruefully, “Hillsdale is so dull.”

“Nonsense, Lottie, Hillsdale is a lovely place,” said Mrs. Fielding.

“Why can not you join our party, Mr. Barron? My brother Edward is going with us, and you know he is good company. We are going to Hillsdale. It is a delightful place in Summer, the air is invigorating, and the scenery delightful and wild. Mrs. Reed, my sister, would be pleased to have you with us; we are going to stay at her home. Do think the matter over, Mr. Barron.”

“I will, Mrs. Fielding; and thank you sincerely for your kind invitation.”

Barron was feeling as miserable as he looked; and the lady's sympathizing manner touched him.

“She said the name of the place was Hillsdale,” he mused, after he left the house, that day. “Hillsdale! why, that is where Katherine went after she left the city. Yes, I will go;” and then he cursed his folly in not going to her before and pouring out his love.

He called at Mrs. Fielding's a few days after, and said he would accompany them to Hillsdale.

He would establish himself at the hotel at Hillsdale Springs, as he could not think of intruding upon Mrs. Reed's hospitality. The prospect of seeing Katherine again gave him new animation. He would sit in his dusty office before the gas was lighted, during the brief lull in the whirl of business, and dream of Katherine with half-closed eyes. He thought of her, wandering through sweet country lanes by his side. How patient he could be in his persistence — unwinding the silken cord which had gradually gathered around his heart and bound him to her closer than a brother. He would fancy at times she leaned upon his shoulder, and looked up into his face, with her soul beaming out of those deep, liquid brown eyes.

"Darling," he would sometimes murmur, half-aloud, "there is no one in this world like you — not one; there can never be any other to me."

He found himself growing very impatient during the necessary time needed for preparation. Spring had never before been half so beautiful to him. As the time drew near when he should see Katherine, and he realized more and more the depth of his love for her, he trembled at the pos-

sibility of disappointment. The thought that his letter had remained unanswered, troubled him not a little; but his hopeful heart found refuge in the possibility she might not have received it.

He would say to himself: "I can tell her my love far better than it was expressed in that letter; so, if it has miscarried, there is no great harm done."

In fancy, he pictured her face, when she realized how long and deeply he had loved her.

Thus, day by day, the airy castles faded, one by one, and were built again.

At last, the Fieldings and himself were in the cars for Hillsdale. To Barron they seemed to move very slowly. The distance grew gradually less between Katherine and himself. At last, at sunset, they arrived at Hillsdale.

"I will go to the hotel now," he said, in reply to Mrs. Fielding's invitation to go with them to Mrs. Reed's, "and will call on you this evening."

Mrs. Fielding and party soon found themselves at the "Maples," and received a cordial welcome.

"Really, Emily," drawled Mr. Edward Seymour, in his languid way, as they sat on the piazza in the evening, "you have a charming

view from here. I should like to spend all my Summers in this quiet nook, if I could board with you. I can't endure the cooking at these hotels. But I presume the mosquitoes are very troublesome; are they not?"

• No more so than in other country places, Edward," says Mrs. Reed, prepared to defend the "Maples" from all unfriendly criticism.

Just then Katherine came out, awaiting an opportunity for a little talk with her Uncle Edward.

"Well, Miss Seymour, come here, and let me lecture you," he commences, smiling good-naturedly at her. "What is all this I hear about you? Hugh wrote us that half the students in Garrettville were in love with you; that the faculty have united in signing a petition, begging you to go away, so that the young gentlemen can attend to their studies. Now tell me all about it, child, instantly."

"There is nothing to tell, Uncle Edward; and Hugh ought to be ashamed of his nonsense. He would make you and aunt think all the young men in the country were in love with me. He is my worthy knight."

"I suppose you could tell me all in the words

of the old conqueror: *Veni, vidi, vici*. Am I not right? Well, I shall have to ask Mr. Challoner about you, you are so reserved with your uncle. Sincerely, my dear, I am pleased, for your sake, that you have made so excellent a selection. Hugh has written us all about your engagement. He says Mr. Challoner is a thorough gentleman, a descendant of an old Cavalier family, as well as being wealthy. I knew, the moment I heard his name, that he was of good family. I used to know a family of Challoners."

"Frank's ancestors came from England."

"Well I am glad to hear that. There is nothing quite so good as the pure Anglo-Saxon race, after all, my dear. The Seymours are one of the oldest families in England. I have brought my history with me, Katherine, and hope to complete it this Summer."

"I am glad to hear that, Uncle Edward. You must be pleased to near the end of so great a task."

"Yes, of course; but, to change the subject: I suppose we shall see this young Mr. Challoner?"

"Oh, yes, I presume he will be up from Garrettsville to-morrow."

“Did your aunt tell you that Hartley Barron came with us?”

“No, she did not mention it. They have been very busy since they came. I presume she did not think of it.”

“Hartley Barron!” how that name made her heart beat, even yet; and she the betrothed of another.

“Where is he stopping, Uncle Edward?” she said faintly, while a thousand hopes and fears surged through her mind.

“At the hotel at ‘the Springs.’ He said he would call here this evening, and I think this must be him,” as a tall figure came through the gate.

“At last,” thought Katherine; and she thanked the dusk that concealed her face. She knew how pale it must be, by the strange sensation at her heart; it seemed almost to choke her.

Barron came up the walk with a quick, joyous tread. He had seen the gleam of a white dress in the twilight; and, with a true lover’s instinct, divined who was the wearer.

He said “good evening” to Mr. Seymour, and then came quickly to Katherine’s side.

She arose, and gave him her hand. Nothing could have been quieter, more nonchalant than his manner. Sincerely as he loved her, and much as he desired to tell her, he shrank from what was so sacred to him, in the presence of others. He talked of the weather, the scenery around Hillsdale, and other matters of indifferent interest to both. At last Katherine suggested going into the house, and joining the family group in the parlor.

Mrs. Fielding had arranged her plans too carefully to allow Barron to remain in Hillsdale without being fully informed of Katherine's engagement. Her conscience, now, was quite clear regarding the letter; and she reasoned, there would be no explanation likely to ensue under existing circumstances. Would not the companionship between Sarah and Barron in this lovely country place, at last lead him to a declaration of love? She would appear at her best; the country air always improved her appearance. It gave her such a color, made her forget her stiff, shy ways, and appear brighter and younger. Then, besides, this engagement business was quite apt to be contagious; seeing Katherine and Frank Chal-

loner together as betrothed lovers, would certainly cure Barron of any lingering fancy he might entertain for Katherine. Thus reasoned this mother strategist. He will fall in with my plans; his wounded pride will certainly seek consolation in Sarah's company.

Mrs. Fielding was in excellent spirits and was very kind to Katherine. She had known of her niece's engagement for some time, although she had never mentioned it to Barron. Now the time had come when she thought it would be safer to make known the engagement. Therefore she resolved to inform him as soon as possible.

Barron was talking with Katherine, and noting, with eager, lover-like delight, every tone of her voice, and each expression of her mobile face, when Mrs. Fielding came to them.

"Well, Miss Kathie," she said, tapping the girl playfully with her fan, "you really deserve a good scolding for being so very sly. Why did you not write and tell me all about your engagement before this? But Hugh did, so you see we know all." Then turning, she said: "Mr. Barron, what do you think of this naughty girl? She has

been here only a few months, and has already won the heart of a young gentleman who is the hero of the college, Hugh says."

Here Katherine murmured some apology.

"No! you need not say that. I am sure you ought to be very proud of him, if what Hugh tells is true."

Katherine looked embarrassed and annoyed, while Mrs. Fielding continued, still addressing her remarks to Barron:

"Well, sir, shall we congratulate her on the conquest, or scold her for not telling us about it before?"

Ah! what anguish came to Barron's heart, as he listened to those words; how suddenly his air-castles melted away in mist. He could scarcely endure this sudden revelation. He had not dreamed that Katherine — his Katherine, as he fondly, to himself, had called her — could be engaged, and to another.

It was too hard! It could not be true. There must be some mistake. Mrs. Fielding was looking at him keenly, awaiting a reply to her question. He could not dissemble enough to give a sensible, calm answer; he only stammered out

something about "congratulations and best wishes," and arose, abruptly saying that "the evening was very warm, and, if they would excuse him, he would smoke a cigar on the piazza with Mr. Seymour."

Once out in the cool air, he could command himself better; could think calmly over the utter loneliness that came with Mrs. Fielding's words. He walked into the garden, and paced up and down the walk, with tightly clenched hands. His love and his reason were in fierce struggle. He saw nothing. He heard no sound. He seemed to live years, and, in that brief half hour, to grow suddenly old.

Then there came an angry self-contempt: "Why should I love her thus," he asked himself, "when she did not care for me sufficiently even to answer my letter? She might have done that at least, and told me kindly she could not love me. If she had only done so, I would have known there was no hope. I could have borne my sad fate better; for I should not have come here with my heart full of expectancy.

"Oh, Katherine, you looked so good and noble, I did not dream you would treat me, or

any one, so heartlessly. I may have seemed overbold and confident. But I was sincere."

"Whip-poor-will! whip-poor-will!" sang the melancholy night-bird in the wood beyond the garden. The plaintive note seemed to Barron the most exquisitely mournful sound he had heard in all his life.

"Ah, well!" he said at last, with a long, long sigh, "I have only my work left me now — no more love-dreams for me. They only bring disappointment and sorrow. God bless her! I hope he is half worthy of her — no man could be fully so."

After a while, he returned to the house, for the Spartan laws of decorum permit no evidence of feeling, or out-cry of weakness. Hearts may break, but it must be in silence. Though the soul may be crying "Lost, lost," the lips must babble on smoothly.

Barron hid his grief well, as became a brave man. He conversed with Lenore and Sarah in his usual bright and entertaining way; yet, he could not command himself sufficiently to talk with Katherine. The thought that she had given her love to another, and could be no more to him than

a mere friend, was too much to bear in her immediate presence. He avoided her. When his feelings were subdued, he would be to her a faithful friend. He could not trust himself sufficiently to talk with her again that evening.

She was grieved at his manner, and tried to console herself by thinking of Challoner's visit on the morrow.

"He loves me," she thought, "and, oh, how unworthy I am of his devotion. I am unhappy because a man who cares nothing for me, chooses to avoid me. Frank never slights or avoids me. If he were here to-night, I think I should not feel so very desolate."

Thinking of Challoner, she glances at the ring he had given her. Barron, looking at her for a moment, caught the wistful expression on her face, and the look she involuntarily gave the ring. It sent a new pang through his sorely jealous heart.

And thus the evening wore away, very slowly, it seemed, to the company. At last Katherine found herself in her own room. Kneeling by the window, she prayed long and earnestly for strength to subdue the love for Barron, which

was ever coming up in her heart at the sight of his face, or the sound of his voice.

Barron did not rest that night. He paced up and down his room, until the gray dawn came peeping in. Then he started for a long ramble in the woods.

The eminently respectable lady who caused all this misunderstanding and sorrow, slept soundly. No pangs of a guilty conscience disturbed her tranquil slumbers.

CHAPTER XVI.

HER COUSIN'S BETROTHED.

"O, Melancholy ! linger here a while."

Katherine has taken the Hillsdale school, and, in spite of her early dislike for mathematics, is an excellent teacher.

Katherine is in her little school-room. It is recess, and through the windows and door float the voices of merry children at play.

Each window is frame to a living picture. Look which way you may, you catch a glimpse of forest, hill and winding river.

Inside, a solitary, flaxen-haired boy is sitting in a corner, poring over a tattered spelling-book. He is a little rebel, and has been condemned to remain during recess, for some misdemeanor. A large bumble-bee that has sailed lazily in, and the little urchin, are the only companions of the teacher.

She has just finished reading a letter. and the

shadow on her face tells of trouble. It ran thus:

DEAR KATHERINE:—I have not heard from you in two long weeks, and am growing anxious; but no doubt your school keeps you very busy. I can only write a few lines to-day, as baby is not well, and I have no girl in the kitchen.

Cousin Azariah is building a new house. I think I wrote you about it in my last; but for fear I did not, will mention it again. It will be a very handsome residence when completed.

All your friends send love to you. I wish you would get some photographs taken for me, as you promised. I suppose you have changed a great deal.

Oh! how I long to see you; but I know you are far happier there than you would be in Linden Center. Oh, Kathie! I saw father on the street a few days ago. He had been drinking, and was looking very badly. It gave me a great shock to see him looking so different from his old self.

One of the tenants from the farm came here a week ago, on some business, and he told me that father was drinking harder, lately, and was sometimes very quarrelsome. He said Tom was almost a man, growing quite tall; and that he was working very hard. He said when father had been drinking he always abused Tom, and our step-mother encouraged him in doing so. He said father choked Tom, one night, until the poor boy was faint, and came near dying. Only think of that, Kathie; or rather, try not to think of it, for it is too sad and horrible. You know the real cause of Walter's death. I often think that if I ever have such another ordeal to undergo it will kill me.

It makes me sorry to write about these things, for they will sadden you, and do no good. Yet, I feel as though you should know them. There is no one else to tell you. I have about me a constant feeling of dread that something terrible will happen at our old home some day. Happiness fled when drink and our step-mother came. We can only pray that God may, some day, incline father's heart to a better course.

Write me about Mr. Challoner. Aunt Emily seems to think he is an excellent young man, and that you ought to be very happy. I hope you will be, dear sister, for you have certainly known sorrow enough.

I must close, as John has just come home, and I must get supper.

Write to me soon, very soon; and believe me always,

Your loving sister,

HELEN E. GAYLORD.

The letter has fallen from Katherine's hands, and she sits gazing thoughtfully away through the open window, toward the purple hills. Her thoughts are wandering back to childhood on the old farm.

She sees again, in fancy, her brother, the bright companion of many a childish adventure — the little, sympathetic listener, with tears in his large brown eyes, as she tells him of boys lost in forests, and wandering far from friends and home.

He has been like the hero of those childish

tales, wandering all these years from Helen and herself. "Poor Tom!" she murmurs softly to herself. "Poor brother!"

"Did you say I might go out, teacher?" said the flaxen-haired lad, starting up from his seat, eagerly.

"Yes, you may go now, Willie," said Miss Seymour, arousing herself to a sense of the present surroundings. The boy bounds from his seat joyously, and Katherine is left alone with her thoughts.

She is so absorbed she does not notice a gentleman standing in the doorway, looking at her with a grave smile upon his face. He speaks her name gently, and looking up, she sees it is Mr. Barron; she arises and goes forward quickly to welcome him. Mr. Barron is a privileged visitor at the weather-beaten old school house. He has remained at Hillsdale, notwithstanding the suffering it causes him to see another the acknowledged lover of the woman he still adores. He is not a man to run away from any thing, even sorrow; so he stays at Hillsdale, and faces his great disappointment bravely.

He has seen Challoner; and, while admitting,

generously, his honest intentions, fine looks, and undoubted talents, there is an unspeakable something about the young man which disappoints him. He can not define his feelings, nor give ground for his belief. He has studied Challoner's character with eyes which his love for Katherine has made keen and critical, and he can not candidly say he thinks Challoner the man to make Katherine happy. Barron is noble enough to wish, for her sake, it is not so. Frank is brilliant, he admits; almost too brilliant, Barron thinks, with a sigh. It would be better for Katherine, with her peculiarly sensitive and poetic nature, had she found a lover, who — while possessing delicacy and spirituality enough to sympathize with her — had the manly strength of character needed to guide her in times of trial.

Trials will come; and to whom can we look for earthly consolation with such confidence as to the one who has sworn to love, cherish and defend?

Barron thought of all these things, sorrowfully, as he watched young Challoner; and he resolved, although fate had robbed him of one dearer to him than life, that his brotherly care and

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watchfulness over Katherine should never cease. He noticed that Katherine seemed unhappy at times, and thinks she has possibly observed the flaws in her lover's character—flaws which this keen lawyer and man of the world has also detected. Shades of arrogance, often seen in shallow characters, would show themselves. Selfishness, although well-hidden by Challoner's polished manners, occasionally crops out.

With all this, Challoner is a very devoted lover, and Katherine chides herself for being ungrateful and wicked in feeling so sad and lonely.

Mrs. Fielding puts only one construction upon Barron's prolonged stay at Hillsdale, which, of course, is the one most favorable to her wishes and plans. She is, generally, in excellent spirits—always planning some pic-nic or excursion for the young people.

Harry Featherstone has come up from the city, and is stopping with Barron at "the Springs." He seems to enjoy Lottie's company very much, and Mrs. Fielding's face beams with motherly joy at the prospect of having both daughters well established.

Barron came to the school-house, to tell Kath-

erine they were all going to Wildwood Lake for a drive, and afterward a row by moonlight, and that she must come home from school early — “by half-past three, anyhow, for we want to get an early start,” he says.

After hearing the message, she is about to ring the bell for the children; he gently prevents her, taking the bell from her hand.

“Please let the children have ten minutes more,” he pleads. “I want to speak with you.”

She obeys, wondering greatly what he can have to say. He looks very grave as he commences:

“Miss Seymour, I think I have noticed lately, that you avoid me; and, knowing your kind heart, I have attributed it to that unfortunate letter of mine. I think it was the cruelest blow I ever received — your not answering it; but I do not, and will not, blame you, for it may have seemed strange and sudden to you — receiving such an avowal, when you had known me so brief a time.

“Yet, please believe me, Katherine, when I tell you that the reason I did so, instead of speaking, was because I could never see you alone; I there-

fore wrote that letter. I felt a little bitter at first, to think you would not even answer it; but it is all over now, and, if I can never be nearer to you, I want you to let me be your friend — your faithful, devoted friend. Will you not do this, Katherine? and do not avoid me, as you have done, for it grieves me.”

She listened with a puzzled expression, which he could not interpret.

“Your letter!” she says at last. “Really, Mr. Barron, I don’t understand you. I have never received a letter from you — never — I am quite sure.”

The sudden pallor that creeps over his face, frightens her.

“Say that again, Katherine,” he says, in a strange, faint voice.

“I have never received a letter from you, Mr. Barron,” she repeats quietly and earnestly, and then she sees him bow his head upon the seat before him, while the strong frame trembles with agitation.

“Oh, Mr. Barron, speak to me! tell me what it is that troubles you,” she implores.

He looks up after a few minutes, and taking

her hands, gazes long and earnestly into her clear eyes. There is great sorrow in his own, struggling with joy, which, shining in the depths of those wonderful eyes, makes his face seem glorified.

"Katherine," he said, "dear Katherine! I wrote you a letter while you were in New York, and sent it by a messenger, on the morning you left the city. If you did not receive it, there is some mystery about the matter, which must be cleared up."

"Would you mind telling me the contents of that letter?" she asks, although a vague, blissful idea of what it might be, makes her tremble with happiness. Yet, believing Hartley Barron to be Sarah's lover, she can not realize fully what his sorrow and agitation betray.

"Katherine"—he answers, looking at her with eyes which make her own droop and bring a flush to the pale face—"Can you be so blind? Can you ask me such a question?"

She suddenly remembers that he is her cousin's lover, and has no right to look at her as he is doing now. She draws her slight form into an erect and dignified posture.

"Why should I not ask that question, Mr.

Barron? I think it a very natural one. What has my cousin's promised husband to say to me, that he should write me a letter?"

"Your cousin's promised husband! Oh, Katherine, do you say that? You surely can not believe it. I am no woman's promised husband! Only a lonely, sorrowful man, and likely to remain so," answers Barron, very bitterly. "What an absurd idea, Katherine, for you to entertain! I like Sarah as an old friend; but I have no love in my heart for any woman but one."

She can hardly fail to guess who that one woman is, by the glance that accompanied these words.

"And so you are not engaged to Sarah?"

"Upon my honor, Katherine, I never even spoke to her of love. She never told you that I was engaged to marry her, did she?"

"Oh, no, never!" answers Katherine. She is too honorable and proud to expose Mrs. Fielding. Barron, seeing her confusion, asks no more questions; though he has shrewd suspicions as to the cause of this cruel misunderstanding. Modest as he is, regarding his own merit, he has often thought, of late, that Mrs. Fielding's extreme

kindness may have been prompted by selfish motives. He changes the current of their talk.

“You ask me to tell you the contents of that letter. It would take me a long time; and perhaps I do wrong in telling you, now that it is too late. But I can not have you doubt and misjudge me any longer. I will tell you all, and after you have heard my story, you will not think of me so unkindly as I know you often have. But I must go now; I have already detained you too long. I will make an opportunity to see you alone, as, alas! I ought to have done long ago. Will you meet me in the garden, Katherine, to-morrow evening? I must see you for an hour, alone. Do not refuse me! It may be the last favor I shall ask of you.”

She does not refuse him. Is not her own heart pleading for an explanation of this mystery? How differently the world looked to her, now!

“He has not deceived me. He has not loved another. He has not loved any woman but one,” she says over and over to herself, thinking of his words. That “one woman” she knows is Katherine Seymour. Arousing herself from these happy thoughts, she sees her sister’s letter which has

fallen upon the floor. With a pang of self-reproach at her own happiness, she says:

“How selfish I am, to forget about Tom so soon,” and then, for the first time that afternoon, a thought of Frank Challoner comes. She looks at his ring. It seems a fetter now — a great sense of desolation and loss overwhelms her.

“Alas!” she murmurs, “my beautiful ship has come in; but what matters it, now, to me? It has come too late! too late!”

CHAPTER XVII.

TELL ME YOUR WISH.

"One true heart beats for thee alone."

Katherine finds them waiting impatiently for her, when she comes from school.

She feels uncomfortable and shy toward Chalonier as he takes his seat by her side; while his manner toward her is unusually tender and devoted. He discovers that she desires to be quiet; so he leaves her to enjoy her own company, while he keeps the other occupants of the carriage in gay spirits, by chatting in his odd, original way. To-day he is very bright—sometimes witty.

Katherine does not heed him; she is thinking of the afternoon's revelation, and looking forward to her coming interview with Barron.

About sunset they arrive at the lake. They spend a pleasant hour upon the tranquil waters. Myriads of water-lilies blossom upon the surface,

and their pale faces are turned heavenward like so many pure, prayerful nuns.

When they drive homeward the stars are out, and the new moon casts a halo of silver light over the hills.

“Why are you so quiet, Katherine?” Challoner tenderly asks, as he wraps her cloak about her; the dew is falling, and the night air is growing chilly. “There’s the new moon. Let us wish, and see if the old superstition is true.”

They gaze at the slender crescent in silence. Then, Challoner insists on Katherine telling him her wish.

“You are foolish to ask, Frank! You will be much happier in not knowing,” she said to him, and the earnest ring of her voice surprises him.

“Why, Katherine! I did not care very much about it before; now you have aroused my curiosity; please tell me what you wished, dearest!” he urges.

How can she tell him! The dearest wish of her heart is that Hartley Barron may prove to her he loves her — has loved, even as she has loved him! — even as she loves him NOW!

“His love,” she thinks, “can never make me

as happy as once it would have done. I can bear almost any thing, if I may only hear, from his own lips, that he has held me dear."

"Katherine," says Challoner, "I will tell you what I wished. I wished, with all my heart, that we might be married immediately after I graduate. I wish to take you home with me when I go. Besides, I am getting jealous of that Mr. Barron. He is fond of you, darling; I know it by his expression when he looks at you."

Katherine trembles at the thought of marrying the man at her side. Can she marry him. Ought she ever to have promised to marry him? Oh! how much she would now give for freedom! It can be had only by walking ruthlessly over the ruined hopes of one who loves her passionately. The price of happiness is too costly—she can not break her word.

She never forgot the struggle in her heart that night, as they "rode beneath the deep-hill shadows," and saw,

"Below them far, the white fogs walk,
Like ghosts, the haunted meadows."

Nor did Frank Challoner forget that ride. He thought of her often, in after years, as she looked

then; her pure face seeming so saintly in the moonlight.

The words of a song float sweetly out upon the cool night air:—

“O, loving heart! trust on, trust on!
One true heart beats for thee alone.”

Katherine, listening to the song, smiles sweetly. Challoner, seeing the smile, imagines she is tenderly thinking of him. She is dreaming over these words, spoken in the school-room to-day: “I have no love in my heart for any woman but one.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN AN OLD-FASHIONED GARDEN.

"Noblesse oblige."

It is eight o'clock. And Katherine finds herself free to meet Barron. The balmy breeze is shaking the perfume from the flowers, and a few threatening clouds are in the sky. The whip-poor-will has commenced his evening song, as, with beating heart, Katherine goes out by the side door, down a path through the maples, into the old-fashioned garden.

Barron has been waiting, and meets her at the gate. Giving her his arm, he leads her down the path, through beds of carnations and mignonette. They do not speak for a long time; both hearts are too intensely full of happiness, nearly akin to pain. At times, silence is most eloquent between persons so dear to each other.

Barron thinks if Death should seek them both now, he would not be an unwelcome visitor. He

has been so sorely tried of late, that he has grown almost desperate; but calmer thoughts soon come.

At last, he leads Katherine to a seat, and tells her all; how he had loved her since that evening at the opera; how jealous he was when Harry Featherstone talked with her; how vainly he had sought an interview; how he had written to her; how he waited for an answer; how his heart had grown sick with hope deferred; that he came to Hillsdale, to tell her all, and learn his fate from her own lips; and how, upon the evening of his arrival, he learned of her engagement to Challoner.

She sat as if in a trance, while he pursued his story. She uttered not a word; her heart was too full.

"I do not tell you this, in the hope that you will be disloyal to Challoner," he said. "I pray that you may be very happy with him. God knows how dearly I love you. I would give up any thing for you. At first, I felt wicked and selfish. I could not help it. I have conquered all that now; but I could not allow you to think I would deceive you, by word or look. You

women are too keen-eyed in matters of the heart, not to have noticed them. I am not fickle, and I despise a man who flatters a woman that she is loved, then leaves her with her grief when his fancy falls upon some new face. You do not blame me for telling you all?" he whispers gently.

Her head is turned from him. The night is dark. He can not see her face. She does not answer. Gently and very tenderly he draws her toward him. A tear fall upon his hand. It sends a strange tremor through him. Its subtle power almost unmans him.

He murmurs "My darling!" Almost unconsciously their lips meet in a long, impassioned kiss.

The whip-poor-will pours out its plaintive song.

Katherine is the first to speak: "Am I false? Am I false? My hand is pledged to one—my heart is held by another," and tries to withdraw from his embrace.

"No, my love," answers Barron, "you are not false. I only am to blame, if either has done wrong. I should have known I could not resist clasping you in my arms, if you were near me.

I know now that you would have loved me, had not cruel fate ordered otherwise. I will not keep you longer ; but, say that you forgive me, before you go."

"You know that I forgive you," answered Katherine.

"And promise you will write me, if ever you need a friend."

• "I promise," she said faintly.

Her heart was very sad.

"No matter how hard the task may be, I will undertake it for your sake. No matter how far away I may be, I will come when you call me. Give me the rose you have in your hair. I shall wear it near my heart. It shall be my talisman. I am going away, Katherine."

"Going away, so soon?"

"Yes ; to-morrow. After this, I could not endure seeing another claim you as his own, and Challoner has that right."

"Oh, Hartley," she cries. It was the first time she had ever called him by that name ; and though it made her tremble a little, it sounded painfully pleasant. As she realizes how dear he is to her ; how much she has leaned upon him

for advice during the Summer ; and, even with so much misunderstanding between them, she can not bear to have him go. All her strength seems ebbing.

“Yes ! I must go, Katherine ! You know I would not rob another of the woman he loves, when they have plighted troths, if I could. I must flee the temptation !

“It is hard — hard for us both. My desire is at war with my judgment. I can not weigh it justly, with you before my eyes. The temptation to have you in spite of every principle, right or wrong, is too great. But either of us must not sacrifice honor.”

As he finishes, Katherine, looking up at him, loves him more than ever. He is so strong — so noble. He takes her hand at last, and places upon her finger the ring she once refused to wear.

“Wear this for me, Katherine,” he says, “and when you look upon it, believe there is in this world one person who is faithful to the love he bears you — yes, faithful unto death ! If you are in trouble, send for me, and I will come, though oceans divide. Promise me, dearest !”

“I promise ; but, oh, Hartley, do not go away

to-morrow. Do not go away so soon! What shall I do! How can I live without you?"

"You will not live without me. So long as we two exist, our spirits shall be one."

Katherine's pale face glows now with spiritual beauty, as she answers: "I am glad to hear you speak so, for I sometimes believe I shall not live many years." Then, as she thinks, what life will be without him—a barren waste—she leans her weary head upon his bosom and weeps silently. Gently he strives to comfort her; strokes her hair, as if she were a grieved child, though his own heart is almost ready to break.

It is late when she lifts her tear-stained face.

"Good-bye, my only love," he says; "hereafter I shall only see you before others. Oh, Katherine, Katherine! you can not know how hard it is for me to leave you. I know at last you love me. This will sustain me. I must act honorably, no matter what suffering it may bring. One more kiss, darling; it may be the last."

A few moments later she is in the house, and in her own room. Lottie, coming in, finds her silent, and complaining of a head-ache, so does not urge her to go down stairs.

Katherine finds it very difficult to meet Chaloner after this, though he does not seem to notice the subtle change in her manner. He appears to grow fonder of her, as she becomes more pensive.

She resolves to tell him all, and ask to be released.

Several times she endeavors to lead the conversation into a channel that will give her an opportunity, but it is always checked by some endearing expression, or protestation of his faith in her. This makes it the harder, and she postpones the task from day to day.

Barron has returned to the city, and she hears nothing from him ; but he is ever present in her thoughts.

The Summer is passing, and the young people of "the Maples" make the most of the long, bright days.

CHAPTER XIX.

THIS SORDID AGE.

“Under the greenwood tree.”

The company at “the Maples” were assembled under the wide spreading old trees. They had been playing croquet, and sat down to rest before going in.

Challoner brought a book, and began to read to Katherine; as he was a fine reader, the others drew together, gradually, and he was soon surrounded by an attentive audience.

By some fatality, as Katherine thought, the poem selected was “Guinevere.” The musical intonations of the reader’s voice gave added pathos to the touching story; and, as he read, there fell upon the company a profound silence.

There is nothing in modern poetry more sublime than Arthur’s words to the Queen, after she has fled to the convent, where he visits her before his last battle.

Challoner's impressible nature seemed to catch the spirit of the great King as he read :

“ My love hath wrought into my life so far,
That my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance and so thou purify thy soul,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure,
We two may meet before high God ; and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband, not a smaller soul,
Nor Launcelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope ! ”

The reader paused, and laying aside the book, with a smile at Katherine, whose large eyes were misty, said he would read no more.

“ How very blind she must have been not to have loved King Arthur,” said Lenore, with a sigh. “ What grand unselfishness there is in those words ; how very different he must have been from men of the present age. Men, now-a-days, think it no shame to bruit their domestic troubles abroad, and the world sneers at it ; or, they will cover a wife's name with shame, because of some real or fancied wrong done to their vanity. It is almost always their vanity that is hurt,

more than their feelings; any one will observe who has studied the matter. This is not the age of heroes."

"Nay, Cousin Lenore, I think you are wrong." It was Sarah who spoke, in her quiet tones. "I believe with Aurora Leigh:

'All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes.'

and that

'Every age, through being held too close, is ill discerned
By those who have not lived past it.'

"Besides, poets have only preserved the exceptionally fine character of past ages, while men and women of mediocre talent have been allowed to die in the natural way. Rest assured, my cousin, human nature is much the same as it was in the days of chivalry. It only needs a fit occasion to call out the heroism lurking in men's hearts. We have abundant proof of this in the war chapters of our country's history. If any thing, I think men purer. Women have so many privileges in these days, that a lover-knight, sworn to avenge their wrongs and defend their rights, is really unnecessary. All true men are ready to defend a lady."

"Yes, I know; and yet the age is a sordid one. You can not deny it."

"I do deny it most earnestly, Lenore. You think it wise to abuse the times in which you live. Many others have made the same mistake. It's only poets who see common things blazing in the light of divine significance."

"You are right in the main, Miss Fielding," said Challoner; "and yet, there are some things in which we certainly have grown degenerate. Respecting ladies, for instance—how much more sacredly they were guarded. I think this horrible publicity to which American women are constantly exposed, takes away the greatest charm of shrinking modesty, delicacy and womanhood. One can not imagine a Juliet, or a Cordelia, making speeches from a public platform, or appearing in the courts of law. I declare, I have so great a horror of women appearing in such public places, even when necessary as witnesses, that I would sacrifice almost any thing, rather than have the woman I love go through such an ordeal."

"Why, Frank," said Lottie, "there was Portia. I am sure she was a charming character; yet, she

appeared in court, and dressed in a lawyer's gown, too."

"Oh, yes, I know that, and most people admire the character; but that was a very different affair, and does not alter my opinion in the least."

"You are so headstrong, Frank, I should not attempt to change any of your pet theories."

"Well, to return to our theme," said Chaloner; "I was about to remark that, if Guinevere had lived in these degenerate days she would never have retired to a convent; she would have applied for a bill of divorce, and, if she succeeded in getting it, would have married Sir Launcelot. Women are getting to be much more enlightened than they formerly were! Though they gain in worldly wisdom, they lose in womanly delicacy. We have no more charming pictures of a fair lady, sewing or embroidering, in a turret chamber. Now the sewing is given to the seamstress, or the sewing machine, while the fair lady promenades the street, searching for bargains in silk, or lounges while she reads the last newspaper gossip."

"Alas, poor Frank! how I pity you! Shall I tell you how to get away from all these shocking,

common-place things, since you consider our civilization a failure?"

"Yes, pray do, cousin Lottie."

"Well, you are Turk, sir,—a barbarous Turk; and in order that your taste will not be shocked, you must go to Constantinople. I think your talk heathenish to a high degree; for my part, I confess my admiration for the girl of the period!"

"So do I," said Harry Featherstone, with a sly glance at Lottie, which brought the quick blush to her cheeks; "I am sure your turret chamber damsel made a most stupid companion, without an original idea; except, perhaps, about the different shades of silk she used in her everlasting embroidery. I like a woman who can talk with me, and sometimes get the best of the argument, too. Such women sharpen a man's wits amazingly. They are mental tonics. Besides, I can't say that I ever admired the way those mediæval chaps had of going around, poking spears into every fellow who would not swear that the first party's lady love was fairer than all other women on earth; that her eyes were brighter than the moon, and all that sort of stuff. Now, really, I call such customs a trifle absurd. Then, how

remarkably uncomfortable they must have been on a hot day, clad in armor, and with those queer things on their heads."

"Helmets, you mean, Harry," said Lottie.

"Yes, helmets; they look like inverted soup kettles, you know."

"Oh, how irreverent you are, Harry!"

"Well, I feel irreverent when I think of wearing a helmet on a day like this. The mere thought of it makes the perspiration start from every pore."

They all laughed at his comically doleful look.

"Thank you, Mr. Featherstone, for defending the girls of the Nineteenth century so well. Your view is the right one. Cervantes saw how absurd it all was; and after Don Quixote was written, chivalry died. I am proud of the present age; and frankly admit that I prefer a good novel, or an excursion down to Stewart's, to perpetual spinning in an old turret chamber — no matter how romantic or ivy-covered it might be. And further, in my estimation, the man who can make plenty of money, and give me at least two-thirds of it, is the most sensible hero. Now, Mr. Challoner, an-

nihilate me by your scornful glances, do!" and the saucy girl shook her head in protest against Challoner's contemptuous smile.

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr. Seymour, "I believe we began this conversation by speaking of King Arthur and his Queen. Now, King Arthur is a mythical character—quite so; but granting that such a person really existed, I believe, had we known him at his best, we should have found him much like any other high-souled gentleman of to-day."

"I would have chosen him instead of Sir Launcelot. I repeat it," said Lenore.

"No, Lenore, you would not have done any such thing. King Arthur's chief glory was in his moral greatness; and a woman will always choose the great, strong, muscular hero, no matter how shabby his record may be morally. Talk about 'the grandeur of moral courage.' Bah! they never give it a thought when placed opposite the other kind. Deep in every woman's heart there is a feeling of admiration for strength and animal courage; and the more delicate and refined the woman, often the deeper her admiration for these qualities in which she is lacking. Now, for

instance, there was Charlotte Brontë, who possessed one of the most spiritual of natures. In her great novel she has chosen for her hero a man of strong, fiery nature, and great physical strength; while the man of cool blood, and moral greatness, is only a minor character. Poor Guinevere! how could she help loving so grand a knight as Sir Launcelot, her companion and protector during that long journey?

“’Twas in the spring time of the year
Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
Rode through the coverts of the deer.”

Can you not see the picture they made — such a goodly pair?”

“She was not to blame for loving him,” said Challoner. “Her sin lay in concealing it from her husband and king. See what misery came of it. I think it the most cruel act of which a woman can be guilty, to marry a man, without she is sure, beyond a doubt, that she loves him better than all earth beside.”

“We have had quite enough of this kind of talk, I think,” said Mr. Seymour, “and I propose going into the house and partaking of some iced

lemonade. It's exceedingly warm. I fear we have disgusted the sedate school-mistress with our random talk. She has not spoken for an hour." (This was to Katherine, who was looking pale and unhappy.) "Well, little girl, what do you think? Have all the heroes been buried with Sir Launcelot and King Arthur?"

"No, indeed, Uncle Edward," answered Katherine, earnestly, "I know there is one hero in the world, even now."

"Oh, yes, of course! and Katherine Seymour is the fortunate girl to whom he has given his heart. Am I not right?"

She makes no answer, and Challoner, thinking she had him in her mind, is elated. He walks by her side as they sauntered toward the house, and speaks to her in a low voice:

"I am no hero, Katherine; but true enough, I trust, to fight your battles so long as I have life, and to guard your name from every breath of slander."

CHAPTER XX.

DIRE DISASTER.

“Still, where rosy pleasure leads,
See a kindred grief pursue.”

Katherine asked herself many times, why this feeling of vague distrust haunted her persistently. Perhaps Challoner's rhetoric was too fine, his sentences too poetical, for sincerity. Genuine feeling usually comes in few words. He seems only to like the bright and beautiful. His tastes are too refined, dainty and fastidious for a strong nature.

“But what right have I,” she asked herself, “to criticize him — loving another, as I do?”

She again makes the resolution to tell him all, and ask him to forgive and release her. This burden of deceit is growing too heavy to carry. Barron had said honor must be their guide; and, like most conscientious natures, he fancied that

which was hardest for him to bear must be right. He did not desire her to break her engagement with Challoner. He had gone away to battle alone with his sorrow.

"Katherine," said Hugh, who had just come from the postoffice, "I have two letters for you, and a newspaper."

"Well, give them to me," she answers, smiling. The smile dies away, as she notes the grave look upon his usually cheerful face.

"Dear Katherine," he says, "be brave. I fear you have bad news." The envelopes were bordered with black.

"Oh, give them to me," she answers, "I can bear any thing better than suspense."

As he hands them to her, he watches her anxiously. One was in Helen's well-known hand, and as she glances at it, she breathes more freely. Whatever the bad news may be, her sister is spared to her, and she murmurs a low "Thank God!"

The other was addressed in a rude, school-boy style. She opened Helen's first, and, as she reads, her hands tremble, and her face grows paler every moment. The letter was as follows:

DEAR KATHERINE:

Another great sorrow has come upon us. Poor father is no more! Had he died a natural death, we might have borne it with fortitude! But that he should be found in his own room — shot dead! It is too horrible! and they have arrested Tom, on the charge of murder! He is now in jail, and the neighbors believe him guilty. A pistol, which he borrowed a few days previously from a boy, was found in father's room. It makes me heart-sick!

Of course, the boy is innocent. He declares his first knowledge of the horrible deed, was the pistol-shot which waked him from a deep slumber. He ran down stairs to his father's room, and found him on the floor — DEAD!

I can not get rid of the suspicion that our step-mother has a knowledge of this deep mystery. She acts her part with all the cunning of her subtle nature. She does not charge Tom with the deed directly — rather by intimation. She has appeared deeply grieved, and so worked on the sympathy of the neighbors; and, through her adroitness, Tom has been arrested. It has nearly broken the poor boy's heart, and mine.

Father's terrible death will be heralded near and far, and should Tom be innocent, or otherwise, it is a stain on the name we have cherished with such justifiable pride. I should relieve Mr. Challoner from his engagement immediately. Come home to me, Katherine, come! and may God be the trust of our afflicted family.

Your own true sister,

HELEN.

The other letter was from Tom, blotted with tears, and telling her of his arrest, declaring

his innocence and protesting against such cruelty. It was a manly letter for a boy of seventeen ; and, although full of sorrow, seemed to breathe a spirit of confidence that he would soon be cleared from all suspicion.

He had not been allowed to write either of his sisters while his father was alive, and this was the only letter Katherine had received from him. Nor had she seen him since the night she kissed him as he lay asleep in the little back room in the old farm house.

She read Helen's letter, only half comprehending its meaning ; and now had nearly finished Tom's, when a deadly faintness came over her, the letter fell from her hand, and her over-taxed nerves gave way.

Hugh had been painfully watching her, and sprang in time to prevent her falling. Mrs. Reed gathered the letters, and, with a face scarcely less pale, glanced at their contents.

Mrs. Fielding and her brother, though terribly shocked by the fearful news, retained sufficient presence of mind to arrange that Challoner and Harry Featherstone should be out of the way before they talked much of the affair.

“It will be in every newspaper in the land before another week goes by,” said Mr. Seymour. “They will learn of our disgrace soon enough, so let us uphold the family honor while we can,” and sorrowfully he thought of his unfinished family history; and how, at last, that record of the lives of brave men and pure women might be stained by this crime. “God grant the boy may be innocent! If he did commit the crime he is the first Seymour who has dishonored the name.”

CHAPTER XXI.

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER.

"So let them fall away,
Friends of a Summer day."

The party at "the Maples" was breaking up, and the gay young people were departing.

Katherine's misfortune hung like a pall over the household. The easy-going, pleasure-seeking Edward Seymour, under the trying circumstances developed the latent strength of his character, and proved a faithful friend to Katherine.

"I shall go with you," he said, "and see what can be done for Tom. God knows whether he is guilty or innocent; but he has the same blood in his veins that I have, and he shall not lack a friend or money. Now, keep calm, my dear; no good can come by exciting yourself. We will do our best for him."

Katherine made hasty preparations to return West. Challoner had heard of the terrible crime,

and it was a great shock to him; yet he did not let Katherine know his feelings. He seemed to be drawn closer to her by this great affliction. He called the day before she left Hillsdale.

“My dearest,” he said, “you do not know how sorry I am, and how I wish I could go with you. My place is at your side; it seems cowardly to let you go alone; I shall pray for you most earnestly. You know how I am situated, and you will not blame me. Our Commencement comes soon, and for four long years mother and Nellie have been looking forward to my graduating. They are coming North to be with me then; and it would almost break my mother’s heart if I were to disappoint her. If I considered only myself, it would be different. I would that I could guard you from the terrible publicity to which you will be exposed;” and he shuddered as he thought of Katherine in court. Then turning to her again suddenly, while a scarlet flush rose to his cheek: “Katherine, I want to know if you love me sufficiently to make a sacrifice for my sake? I do not want you to go West—stay here. Don’t go, dearest, don’t go! You can do no possible good. If your brother is innocent, it will be so proven.

You can not help him, and will be dragged into court under the most shocking circumstances. Just think how you will be stared at; and probably your personal appearance criticised by these horridly impudent reporters. You know how I dread such notoriety. If you have any love for me, stay! Your sister will do every thing for your brother that you could; it will not affect her reputation as it will yours — she is married. My mother is one of the most fastidious of women; and if your name should be bruited about in connection with a criminal trial, as it will be if you persist in the insane attempt to shield your brother, she would never get over it. Stay, dear, and see her. When she sees how delicate and refined you are, she can not help loving you, and I am anxious that she should. It would grieve her to think her only son was engaged to a girl whose brother was tried for murder; and that you was mixed up in the case. Besides, it looks so unwomanly. Leave that work to lawyers, and stay here with me!”

He paused, and waited for an answer. She listened to his pleading very quietly. The only evidence of her indignation was the quiver of

her delicate mouth. She turned her honest, angry eyes full upon him.

“And this is your chivalry, Mr. Challoner! You advise me to allow my only brother to take his chances with his counsel, perchance lose his life, because you deem it unwomanly for me to act in so public a matter? Let my brother — my only brother, the playmate of my childhood — perish, without so much as lifting my hand to save him! Do I understand you aright? I thought you brave! I do not think so now! I do not blame you for not wishing to go with me. I did not ask you; I never thought of it; but your advice to forsake my brother in this hour, is cowardly! Do not be alarmed about how your mother may feel. She could not think less of me than I should of myself, did I allow your advice to influence me in the least. I wish you to take back your ring. Forgive me if I wrong you. You can not see this in the light I do. We differ so widely about grave things, I am sure we could never be happy together.”

Challoner paled at the word “coward.” His dark eyes flashed ominously. He really loved her, in his selfish, haughty way; and, although

her cutting words made him burn with anger, he controlled himself.

“Katherine,” he said at last, “I can not give you up. You are unjust to me. You know it is my love for you, which makes me dread to hear the slightest word against your name. I wish you would listen to reason, but if you will not, and insist upon going West, do not let us part in anger. Katherine, your cold looks make me wretched. You are nervous—worn out with grief. Think the matter over calmly. Remember, whichever way you decide, I will not take back the ring.”

She looked at him earnestly. “Frank,” she said at last, very gently, “you are right; we must not part in anger. I am hardly myself to-day, I have suffered so much; but there is one thing of which I wish to speak. Should my brother be proven guilty, what then? Do you think I could allow myself to enter an honorable family unwelcomed? Do you think I would permit you to keep a promise made under such different circumstances? Never! We shall always be friends, I trust; but, husband and wife, never! I shall always think of this Summer, and of you. I was very lonely and sad when I came here, and

you were kind to me; but it is best that we should say good-bye now. I am right!"

He looked at her keenly. A gleam of jealous suspicion was in his eyes.

"Very well; it shall be as you wish." He took back the ring, and said: "It is time the bauble was broken or lost—out of the way somewhere."

They were standing near a little brook, that ran through the lower end of the garden; and, before she could prevent him, he had taken the ring from her outstretched hand, and thrown it in the water.

"See," he said, watching with a gloomy face the waters, as they bubbled over the trinket, "it has vanished—like my hopes of future happiness. I wish I could cast aside memory as easily. I am no fool, Katherine Seymour. I have seen Barron follow your every motion, with eyes which poorly concealed his love. I half believe you have deceived me all along. You grow pale, even now, at the mention of his name. Curse him! how dare he come between us?"

"Mr. Challoner, I have given you credit for being a gentleman. Take care that you do not

forfeit my opinion. It is your own pride that has come between us."

"Well, I will say no more," he replied. "Good-bye! I must go. I only offend you more, the longer I stay. God bless you. Remember, you carry with you my troth—and—love."

CHAPTER XXII.

GUILTY, OR NOT.

"To that last nothing under earth."

It was a cloudy, melancholy day when they buried Alfred Seymour; yet many were present at the funeral. He had been widely known, and in earlier days had won many friends.

Mrs. Seymour wore a heavy black veil, which entirely concealed her face. As the last solemn words of the burial service ended she shuddered, and leaning heavily upon her aged father, burst into sobs of uncontrollable grief.

Her manner excited much sympathy. "Poor creature!" said people who had hitherto looked upon this sly and crafty woman with dislike. "How badly she feels! It is no wonder—such a fearful death. And by his only son. Shot down without a moment's warning."

And now that Alfred Seymour was dead, people kindly forgot his faults, and talked of his

pleasant, genial manners, his kindness and generosity.

"He was thoroughly a gentleman in most things," they said. "Drinking too much was his only failing."

Vehement and loud were the denunciations of Tom.

"The young villain ought to suffer the extreme penalty of the law." "We must make an example of him," said many.

Perhaps Alfred Seymour was not so responsible for his wasted life, and the sorrow it had brought upon his family, as might appear. Who can tell the temptations resisted, or the anguish that haunted this struggling soul, before it succumbed? No doubt his intemperance was the fatal inheritance from some wild and reckless ancestor.

Katherine and her uncle had arrived at Linden Center. They found Helen in deep distress about Tom. They visited him in prison the day after their arrival. Katherine sobbed as though her heart would break when they met.

Tom was a tall, slender youth of seventeen. His complexion was lighter than Katherine's, but

he had the same deep brown eyes, and her singularly pleasant smile. He had an innocent look in his face, much like the expression of a bewildered child. Katherine threw her arms around him as she had done in girlhood.

"Tom, dear Tom," she said, "I know you are innocent, no matter what they say; and we will save you!"

The poor boy was so touched by her confidence in him, and kindness, and so unnerved by the terrible strain of the past few days, that he would have utterly broken down only for his Seymour pride. He turned away his face, and brushed aside the tears hastily.

"Now tell us all about this sad affair. We are your friends, my boy," said Mr. Seymour, kindly. "We came here to help you; you need not fear to trust us."

"Well, sir," said Tom, "I will tell you all; but most of it is as much a mystery to me as to you. Father, you know, had sold his farm to Mr. Dalgren, of New York."

"Sold the farm!" said Katherine, "I had not heard of that."

"This Mr. Dalgren," continued Tom, "came

West on a sporting tour; and he took such a fancy to the little lake lying east of the house, that he concluded to build a Summer cottage near it, where he could bring his friends during the shooting season. Thousands of wild ducks and geese visit this pond every year, on their way South. He first thought of building a house on the shore; but the ground is marshy around there, so one day he came to our place and asked father to sell him the eastern half of the farm. Father said he would not sell half the farm upon any terms; but that he would sell him the whole for forty thousand dollars. Well, Mr. Dalgren accepted the offer. He is very wealthy, and the place just suited him, being wild and secluded. The day before my father was shot, the sale was concluded, and the purchase money paid. I saw it counted out myself.

“The next day, father said he would deposit the money in the bank at Elgin, for a few weeks. He intended going to California, as soon as he completed his arrangements, and buy a ranche; he felt uneasy about keeping the money in the house, though my step-mother wanted him to leave it with her. She said it would be as safe in

the house as in the bank. Father would not listen to her, and went to Elgin, taking the money with him. He was gone all day. About eleven o'clock in the evening he came home, badly intoxicated. He called for me to come and take care of the horses. I saw that he was quarrelsome, and tried to avoid him; but while I was feeding the horses he came out and began to abuse me, calling me hard names, and swearing until my blood ran cold. He seemed like a demon that night. I presume he had been drinking all day, and was crazy.

“Finally, he came up behind me, sly as a cat, and seized me by the throat. His grasp was like a vice. I thought, for a moment, that he would never let me go till the breath had left my body. I struggled, and at last managed to give him a kick, which made him let go. He did not touch me after that, but said I was a plucky chap, and must go in and drink with him. I promised my mother, on her death-bed, that I would never drink a drop of whisky, and I have kept my promise; I used to pretend to drink with him, and, when he was not looking, would pour the liquor out.

“We went into the house; father asked for the bottle of brandy he had brought home with him. He had called my step-mother and Lyddy up, and Lyddy was getting him some supper. It was then about half-past eleven. He began looking for his bottle of brandy, and when he could not find it, was fearfully angry, and accused my step-mother of hiding it from him. She denied having seen it, and told him I must have taken it from the buggy when he first came home. Then he turned savagely, and was coming toward me with clenched fist. I had been nearly choked to death once that night, I had worked hard all day, and knew that I should be kept up nearly all night, so I was desperate. I faced him, and looking him full in the eye, said: ‘Father, if you choke me again, or lay your hands on me, take care; I am armed, and shall defend myself.’ The pistol was locked in my trunk up stairs; and I only said I was armed to frighten him, and make him let me alone. He did not trouble me any more, and after drinking some strong coffee, became a little sober. About midnight I saw him retire. I was so tired that I fell asleep very soon. I must have been asleep several hours, when I

was awakened by the report of a pistol. I jumped out of bed, rushed down stairs, and into my father's bed-room, and found him lying upon the floor—dead. I was so shocked and terrified by the sight, that my first impulse was to run for help. I did not even lift him up. I scarcely knew what I did, for I had been aroused from a sound sleep. My room was in the garret; and it must have taken me only a few minutes to run down stairs, and into father's room; as I came out of his room, I met my step-mother. She was very pale, and hastily dressed in a loose dressing-gown. 'Oh! Tom,' she cried, 'what has happened? Did you fire that pistol?' I told her that I did not; that some one had shot father. Then I ran over to Steinberg's—the tenant who lives nearest our house—and when I came back with him, I found my step-mother crying, and telling Lyddy Morehouse how she had met me coming out of father's room.

“‘Oh,’ said Lyddy, ‘how ever could you have done such an awful deed, Master Tom?’”

“‘Great Heavens!’ I cried, ‘do you accuse me of shooting father? Why, Lyddy, I know no more about it than you do.’”

"She picked up the pistol from the floor. I had not noticed it before. I saw in a moment it was the one I had borrowed from Will Daley a few days previous. I got it to practice shooting at a target.

" 'Why, how did this come here, Lyddy?' I said.

" 'You brought it yourself, Tom,' said my step-mother, but she did not look at me when she said so. Then Steinberg went for a doctor, and Lyddy and I lifted father and placed him on the bed. Lyddy brought water, and we opened his shirt and bathed the wound. My step-mother did not offer to touch him, saying the sight of blood made her faint; so she went to her own room. Soon after they arrested me, and brought me here. God knows I am innocent; but things look badly, I admit."

While telling his story, Tom had looked his hearers frankly in the face. Now he turned to Katherine, who looked sad and discouraged. "But I think I shall be cleared, for all that," he said, trying to encourage her.

Mr. Seymour, who had watched every expression of the boy's ingenuous face, laid a kindly

hand upon Tom's shoulder. "Yes, you shall be cleared, my boy, if innocence, skill and money are of any avail. I believe every word you have told me. Your's is not the face of a liar or villain. The real murderer of your father is not very far away, mark my words! and if there is any justice in the country, it shall be obtained." Mr. Seymour looked stern as he said this; then a sudden thought came to him, he turned to Tom eagerly: "Was the forty thousand dollars which your father received for his farm placed in the bank?"

"I don't know. I have heard nothing about the money," was the answer.

"Of course not; and when we find where the money is, we shall have a clue to the mystery. I don't believe we shall find it at the bank, but will make inquiry to-morrow. It is strange Mrs. Seymour makes no inquiry about the money—very strange."

"Yes," said Helen, "it is strange, for she loves money better than most people. She comes of a family noted for their avarice."

"I am sorry to leave you, dear brother," said Katherine, as they prepared to depart; "but I will come often, and the next time, will bring

you some books. What books shall I bring you?"

Tom pondered a while. "I have only read part of Robinson Crusoe. Probably you haven't that book."

"No," said Katherine, smiling at his selection.

"Oh, you may smile," he said. "Perhaps you think I have only read novels, but you are mistaken. I commenced to read Robinson Crusoe nearly three years ago, and when I had read it about half through, my step-mother burned it. But I like other books, too. You may bring me Abbott's Life of Napoleon. I like to read the lives of great men."

"You shall have both books," said Katherine.

Then they left him; but their visit had cheered him wonderfully. He whistled softly to himself for a long time after their departure—something he had not attempted before, since coming into that gloomy place.

Soon after her arrival in the West, Katherine received a long letter from Challoner, and a short one from Barron. Challoner's letter was tender and contrite—admitting that he had been wrong in advising her to abandon her brother; declaring

it was his great love for her that prompted him. He finished by saying he should not give her up because of their foolish quarrel, and that he alone was to be blamed.

"I find I can not live without you," he wrote, "and, as soon as Commencement Week is over, I shall go to you. I desire to be near you during your brother's trial, to help you if I can."

She read his letter with a half-sad smile. The day before her departure from the "Maples," he had allowed her to get a glimpse of a cowardly vein in his character, and she could not forget it, no matter how many tender epithets he might write.

She opened the other letter with some curiosity. The handwriting was not a familiar one, but the post-mark made her heart beat fast. She hoped it might be from Barron. It was not a long letter; simply an earnest expression of his sympathy with her in this time of trial, and offering to defend her brother.

Quiet and formal as the letter seemed, her heart was lighter after reading it than it had been for weeks.

"Now I believe there is such a thing as unselfish love," she murmured, as she tenderly folded

the letter and put it away with her treasures. She could now give up all anxiety about the defense of her brother, if Barron undertook it. He was already famous for the skill he had shown in several important criminal cases.

Katherine went immediately to her uncle, and told him of Barron's offer. Looking keenly at her face, a sudden light broke in upon his mind. "Ah!" he said to himself, "so the wind blows in that direction, does it?" then added aloud to his niece: "I call it very noble in him, offering to come so far to defend a poor boy whom he has never seen. I intended to engage Mr. Lawrence, the celebrated lawyer from Chicago; but if Barron undertakes the case, I shall have no fears about Tom. I presume he will be here soon, in order to study the matter carefully, before the trial. I will write to him to-day. By the way, I have inquired about that money, and find it was never deposited in the bank. Your father must have taken it home with him."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TIDE TURNS.

"And circumstance, that unspiritual God."

When court week came, Steinberg, Mrs. Seymour and Lyddy Morehouse appeared before the grand jury, and gave in their evidence. A bill of indictment was found against Thomas Seymour, and a few days later he was arraigned for trial.

The court-room was crowded. The case had created great excitement in the surrounding county—partly because the accused was so young, and partly because the crime attributed to him was such an unnatural one.

Tom was conducted into the court-room. When Katherine saw the handcuffs clasped round his slender wrists, she burst into tears. Her uncle endeavored to calm her, though the proud blood crimsoned his own fine face, at the sight of a Seymour in handcuffs.

"Now, don't you cry, Katherine," he said. "Barron told me he had strong hopes of proving the boy innocent."

Barron had arrived at Linden Center a week before the trial, and worked night and day, subpoenaing witnesses, and examining each minute circumstance connected with the case. He took a deep interest in Tom—perhaps, because the lad so closely resembled Katherine; and then, an act of kindness draws us toward the one on whom it is bestowed. Besides, he had a conviction that the boy was innocent—there was something so transparently honest about Tom Seymour's countenance, that it required a very suspicious nature to believe him acting a part.

The prosecuting attorney, an ambitious, waspish little man, sneered considerably at Barron's youthful appearance.

"I guess he has about finished reading Blackstone," observed the prosecuting attorney. Before the trial ended he was convinced Barron had read other books.

The first day was spent in discussing objections raised by defendant's counsel, as to the indict-

ment; next forenoon, the examination of witnesses commenced.

Mrs. Seymour was first sworn. She was subdued in manner, and looked exceedingly meek and sorrowful. When she took the stand, there was a hum of excited expectation, followed by almost breathless silence, as in her clear, cold voice she gave her testimony.

It was a concise, consistent, and perfectly connected statement; fatally clear, thought the friends of the poor lad; there seemed to be no malice in the manner she spoke of him. Once or twice, before relating any thing pointedly against him, she raised her eyes toward Heaven, as if asking Divine assistance that she might tell the exact truth, when it must necessarily be such an injury to Tom. "For I love my poor husband's son," she said, as though apologizing for her reluctance to testify against him. These little tricks were quite effective in causing some of the spectators to pity her.

"Only think," said a stout lady, with a motherly face, "how hard it must be for the poor thing to testify against her dead husband's only

son. I do pity her. What should I do if my Rob was in his place to-day?"

"Yes," answered her companion, a sour looking spinster, "and just see how cool the young villain looks, and his step-mother trying so hard to shield him, too. I hope she will have grit enough to do her duty, and bring the guilty to punishment, in spite of her feelings. I s'pose them Seymours will try to get a pardon from the Guv'nor. They are a dreadful lofty, proud feelin' set; it would nearly kill 'em to have one of their race convicted of such a crime. But I guess the Seymour name won't stand for much when this 'ere trial is over." Miss Cark smiled maliciously.

It certainly looked dark for poor Tom. Mrs. Seymour stated that Tom had threatened, in her presence, to shoot his father; that he had been moody and dissatisfied for a long time, even violent when thwarted; that he had frequently threatened to take her life; that he had borrowed a pistol a few weeks previous to his father's death, and had diligently practiced shooting at a mark; that she feared he might be meditating some revenge upon his father then, as the late Mr. Seymour had sometimes punished the boy se-

verely for lying; that she (witness) once questioned the prisoner regarding the pistol, asking why he practiced shooting at a mark; he had answered her very gruffly, saying, with a peculiarly wicked expression upon his face, that he "meant to be able to bring down a pigeon the very first shot, or any thing else."

A shudder convulsed her frame as, with strong emphasis, she repeated these words. The prisoner started at this last statement, as if surprised, then flushed and attempted to speak; but a kind look from Barron silenced him, and he listened patiently to the remainder of Mrs. Seymour's testimony, though he trembled, and grew red and pale by turns.

The witness further stated that, upon the night of the murder, she slept soundly until aroused by the report of a pistol, fired, evidently, in the room next to her bed-room; that she arose, and going into her husband's room, found him lying upon the floor, with the blood flowing from a wound in his breast; there was a pistol lying near the dying man, and Tom was just leaving the room.

At this point the pistol found in the room was produced, and Mrs. Seymour, after examining it,

swore that it was the same Tom had borrowed of a neighbor, and used in his target practice.

Barron then commenced the cross-examination. During the previous testimony he had watched her closely. Indeed, he had hardly allowed his eyes to wander from her countenance during the hour in which she had been giving in her fatal evidence; and now there was not a line in that cruel, mask-like face, which he had not studied carefully. He was convinced that he had to deal with no ordinary character, and the concentration of his mind made his face very stern as his grave piercing eyes were bent upon her.

Mrs. Seymour trembled and seemed to shrink beneath their steady gaze. His first few questions, however, were very trifling, easily and promptly answered. The witness regained her composure; and Katherine, who had expected so much when Barron should commence the examination, was disheartened.

The counsel for the State smiled contemptuously.

Barron continued his cross-examination. He succeeded in his design; it was to throw Mrs. Seymour off her guard by an apparently feeble

course. The Court began to manifest impatience at this waste of time. Suddenly there was silence as Barron abandoned his mask of aimlessness, and leaning forward, asked: "What was done with the forty thousand dollars your late husband received for his farm the day before his death?"

Even Katherine, who had a slight idea of his course, started, nervously, as this question was asked. The face of the witness was livid. She had been completely thrown off her guard by the previous questions, and this sudden and direct inquiry sounded like a demand.

She swallowed, and her voice sounded husky and strange as she answered: "I have no knowledge where the money is."

A smile of triumph, slight but significant, passed over Barron's pale face at her answer. She saw she had committed herself, and grew deadly pale. He followed up his advantage.

"I did not ask if you knew where the money is at present," he said; "I asked what was done with the money."

"I do not know what was done with the money."

"What did Mr. Seymour do with the money when he received it from Mr. Dalgren?"

"He carried it to Elgin, with the intention of placing it in the bank."

"Are you sure Mr. Seymour carried it to Elgin?"

"Yes, I am sure he carried it to Elgin."

"Have you made any inquiries about the money since your husband's death?"

"None — whatever."

"Have you received any information concerning the money since your husband's death?"

"I have not."

"So you solemnly swear, madam, that you have not made any attempt to discover where Mr. Seymour left that forty thousand dollars?"

"In the midst of this terrible grief and affliction, would I be heartless enough to think about money?"

"Yes, madam, you would—you are a person likely to think a great deal about money, even in the midst of your great grief."

"I appeal to the Court for protection. I did not come here to be insulted."

"Madam, I beg your pardon. No insult was

intended. So you swear that you have made no inquiries about that money? ”

“ I have made no inquiries about the money, and have received no information concerning it.”

“ Then, of course, you suppose it to be deposited in the bank of Elgin? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But you said, a few minutes since, that you had no knowledge where this money may be. That can hardly be true, if you saw your husband take the money and start for Elgin, intending to deposit it in the bank there.”

“ Must I stay here and be insulted? I can not see that the money has any thing to do with this trial at which I am a witness.”

The Court — “ Witness, you need not give your opinions on such important points. You are here to answer any and all questions which the counsel may ask.”

Mrs. Seymour raises her eyes toward the ceiling, and presses her hand to her heart.

“ Very well, madam,” said Barron, “ as this subject seems to be an unpleasant one to you, we will change it. Were your relations with your

late husband of a pleasant and harmonious nature?"

"Oh, yes; we never quarrelled, and I loved my husband very much. Sometimes, when he had been drinking, he was quite violent; but I never blamed him for that, for liquor changes the best natures."

"I suppose you never tried to thwart his will?"

"Never!"

"Did you poison one of your late husband's favorite horses, on the fifth of August, to prevent him going to Elgin?"

"Never! The horse was sick from over-eating."

"Does your medicinal knowledge extend to the diseases of horses as well as the human family?"

"I can not endure these insults."

Here she looked around the court-room appealingly; but met with little sympathy. There had been suddenly a curious change of opinion in the minds of many of the spectators. The few sharp questions about that forty thousand dollars had done the work well; and the blackening

cloud of suspicion which had hung over Tom Seymour was settling upon the woman who had striven to procure his conviction. She looked very pale, and complained of feeling faint, whereupon the Court excused her for a time. Steinberg, the German tenant, was called to the stand. His testimony was substantially the same as Tom Seymour's, regarding the time the latter aroused him on the night of the murder, and what followed.

Being questioned as to whether Mr. and Mrs. Seymour had lived together happily, he stated that he called at Mr. Seymour's house a few days previous to his death, on an errand, and found husband and wife quarreling. He saw Mrs. Seymour hurl a flat-iron at her husband upon several occasions.

This caused much laughter in the court-room.

Finally, Lyddy Morehouse was called. She stated that she slept in a little room, partitioned off the garret where Tom slept; that she was awakened from sleep by the report of a pistol, and hastily dressing herself, ran down stairs; and that she met Tom and Mrs. Seymour coming from the murdered man's apartment.

Being further examined, she testified that on the night of the murder, she heard Tom tell his father to keep his hands off, as he was armed, and should defend himself; but knew that Tom only said this to prevent his father abusing him, as he was in the habit of doing, when intoxicated.

The witness further stated that the deceased was sometimes very cruel to Tom, and that Mrs. Seymour encouraged her husband in abusing the boy, telling him he must break the boy's spirit, or he would be sorry some day.

Witness stated that she never heard Tom threaten to kill any one. He was very tender-hearted. She had known him to sit up all night with sick animals. She had never known a more conscientious boy than Tom, and she had known him ever since he was a baby.

Here she began to sob bitterly. After a struggle, she regained her composure sufficiently to give intelligent answers, and the trial continued.

"Did you see Mr. Seymour take the money, which he received for his farm, the day he went to Elgin?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the money after his return from Elgin?"

"No, I did not."

"Did you hear any one allude to the money after Mr. Seymour's return?"

"No; I did not hear any one allude to the money, after Mr. Seymour's return from Elgin."

"How was Mrs. Seymour dressed on the night her husband was shot?"

"In a loose gown of gray print."

"Can witness identify the dress, if she sees it?"

"Yes, am sure I can."

"Has Mrs. Seymour worn that gown since the murder?"

"No. She has not worn it since."

"Where is the gown now?"

"At home, in Mrs. Seymour's closet."

"Did Mrs. Seymour go near the murdered man, in the presence of the witness?"

"No; she did not go near him until he was in his coffin; she said that the sight of blood made her feel very faint."

Witness was told no more would be required of her for the present.

The attorney for the defense petitioned the court that he might be allowed to send the sheriff with Lyddy, to the residence of Mrs. Seymour, for the gown the latter had worn on the night of Mr. Seymour's death.

The petition was granted, and court adjourned for the day.

The proceedings became exciting. Opinion toward Tom had changed; and yet, as Barron walked home that evening, his heart sank within him when he thought of the great responsibility resting upon him—the terrible effect upon Katherine, if Tom was not acquitted.

The day's work had been wearying, and little had been gained. The success of his next move hung on a very slender thread. He had sent for Mrs. Seymour's gown, in desperate hope; but next day proved its fallacy.

The cashier of the bank at Elgin was called, and testified that no money had been deposited in that bank by Mr. Seymour.

A saloon keeper was called next, and testified that Mr. Seymour left his saloon about nine o'clock the evening he was shot, and started toward home. Just before leaving, he had taken

a very large sum of money from his pocket, and offered to buy him [witness] out.

Witness further stated that Mr. Seymour handed him several rolls of hundred-dollar bills, and that when he gave them back, Mr. Seymour put the money in his pocket. This statement was also sworn to by several men who were in the saloon at the time.

Witness further stated, that fearing Mr. Seymour might lose his money, as he had been drinking quite freely, and was very careless with it, he had assisted him to secure the money by fastening the opening of his pocket with several large pins.

This statement was sworn to by three other men. The general opinion was that Mr. Seymour had the money with him on the night of his death; but nothing new of importance had been brought to light. The stubborn facts remained that Tom was seen coming from his father's room after the report of the pistol; that he had quarrelled with his father on the night of the murder; that the pistol found near Mr. Seymour was the one Tom had in his possession. What could be done?

•

The little family at Linden Center were in great grief, and despair was settling upon the hearts of the most hopeful, as time passed and no clue could be found to the mystery.

Never had Barron so concentrated his energy upon a case, as on this. Never had he worked with such untiring zeal. He permitted no circumstance, even the most trivial, to escape examination; the details of the tragedy were in his mind all day, and haunted him at night.

Sometimes he would think he had discovered a clue, and he would follow it up eagerly, to find it led only to emptiness. At times he would almost doubt Tom. Once he went to the poor boy, and advised him to tell all and plead guilty. Tom's honest brown eyes filled with big tears at this advice.

"So you think I am lying, do you, Mr. Barron. Well, if you have given me up, I suppose there is no hope for me. 'Confess all!' Why, Mr. Barron, I have confessed all. I did not shoot my father. I have told you God's truth. They may hang me if they want to, but I shall not die with a lie upon my lips;" and so the conversation ended.

The trial was drawing to a close, and all felt as though the verdict would be a severe one for Tom. But light appeared most unexpectedly through the influence of a French woman, the wife of a tenant upon the Seymour estate.

Celestine Antoine, the wife of Hypolyte Antoine, was a good woman, and a faithful daughter of the Roman Catholic church; too good for Hypolyte, who was a great, muscular savage, part brute and part fool, with just enough cunning to render him dangerous. He had been in America only a few years, when he came to Mr. Seymour for land to work.

Mr. Seymour being in a good-natured mood, did not enquire about his character, and let him have a few acres of land. Afterward, he discovered the man was dismissed from the farm he rented the year previous, for stealing. But the papers had been signed, and the man's crops were in the ground; so Mr. Seymour was obliged to make the best of it.

Mrs. Seymour was so avaricious that she closely watched Antoine, fearing an ear of corn, or a few grains of wheat, should be stolen. It embittered her very existence; she threatened

Hypolyte with instant dismissal from the land, imprisonment, even death, if he should ever be found taking any thing from the place.

But the habits of a life-time are not easily changed; and although Mrs. Seymour's threats frightened Hypolyte exceedingly, the well-filled crib which stood near the barn was too tempting; but he was exceedingly cautious.

He was owner of three large Chester White hogs, which were dearer to him than wife or child. He had given each a name, and would stand for hours after work contemplating them with doting eyes.

The evening of the tragedy Hypolyte had rubbed down his pets with unusual care, and bedded them with clean straw. Then he stood gazing at them for a long time. He shook his head despondently, several times, and looked wistfully toward Mr. Seymour's corn-crib.

"Ah, *mes pauvres*," he sighed, "thou dost not get corn enough, and yonder there is plenty;" and a wicked look came into his dull eyes. "Ah, mon Felix, thou art very poor;" then he walked away, shaking his head, and muttering.

About half an hour after the clock in Hypo-

lyte's little hut had struck two, the great burly fellow came out of the back door, with an empty sack slung over his shoulder. He crept stealthily back of Mr. Seymour's house, toward the corn-crib; when opposite Mrs. Seymour's room, which had windows reaching nearly to the ground, Hypolyte paused at seeing a light in the house at so late an hour. He instantly concluded that Mrs. Seymour was sitting up to watch his movements. He had a superstitious dread of her; he thought she had divined his intended raid upon the crib. This made him shudder. "*C'est le diable,*" he muttered, starting to go home without his booty; but his thievish instincts were strong, and by the time he walked back to his pig-pen, he was ashamed of his terror.

The light was probably burning because some one was sick; so, creeping cautiously back, he paused again opposite Mrs. Seymour's window. The curtain was down, but did not quite reach the sill.

Hypolyte dropped upon his knees, and crept stealthily to the window. Hearing no noise, he ventured to look in. The sight that met his eyes convinced him that his worst apprehensions were

correct. He did not wait for a second look, but started for his hut at a break-neck speed.

He burst into his wife's presence, breathless and pale.

"And what hast thou seen then?" cried Celestine. "Men who go abroad to take what is not their own, often see terrible sights, Hypolyte."

Good, honest Celestine did not approve her husband's depredations, and lost no opportunity of giving him a gentle rebuke; but Hypolyte could only shake his head and gasp: "*C'est le diable!*"

After a few moments he said solemnly: "Celestine, rejoice that thy husband was not murdered in cold blood. Ah, she would have shot me through the heart—I know it well—and all for a few poor ears of corn. Mon pauvre Felix must still go hungry." And then he told his wife how he had seen a light in Mrs. Seymour's room, and creeping up, looked in the window, and saw Mrs. Seymour, dressed in a loose gown. But what terrified Hypolyte was the pistol she held in her hand. She was apparently examining it, and Hypolyte, recalling her threats, supposed she was

loading it, to follow him to the crib and deliberately shoot him.

Celestine was nearly sick with sorrow and fear, when she heard of Tom's arrest. She liked the boy, as did all the retainers of the place. She implored her husband to go to Mrs. Gaylord, and tell her what he had seen that night; but he refused.

"So, imbecile, thou wouldst ruin thy husband with thy folly, wouldst thou?" was his reply to her appeal. "What if I tell? Then they will ask me why I was at the window so late at night, and will send me to prison for a thief. I shall be ruined — lost!"

Selfish fear kept them silent; but one day Celestine heard Tom would be hung if no new testimony in his favor was found. In an agony of fear, shame and penitence, she went to the priest at Linden Center, and told her story. Good Father St. Croix commanded her to go to Mrs. Gaylord, and confess all. So, one afternoon, as the two sisters were alone, weeping and praying over their brother's fate, Celestine came to them, with sobs, and told her story. They sent

for Barron immediately. He lost no time in subpoenaing Hypolyte Antoine.

His testimony was deliverance.

This poor, ignorant, French peasant had been the means of saving the life of an innocent boy, and the members of an honorable family, from grief and shame.

In summing up the evidence, Mr. Barron displayed unusual clearness and power. When he closed his plea, there was breathless silence in the crowded court-room, and tears stood in eyes which had not wept for years.

Tom Seymour was acquitted, and there were many thankful hearts in Linden Center that night.

Although Tom was free, the matter was not ended. Mrs. Seymour was arrested. But there came a summons from a higher court. The intense excitement had so wrecked her nerves, that the jailor found her one day with helpless limbs, glaring, beseeching eyes, and a tongue that refused to speak. She had been stricken with paralysis. She lingered only a short time. Before death, she recovered her power of speech sufficiently to whisper a full confession to the minister

who sat at her bedside. She also told where the money was hidden. She expected to take it with her to California, after the trial.

Not even a shadow of guilt now rested upon Tom, and Edward Seymour went joyously back to his history of the Seymour family.

Frank Challoner sent a long, loving letter to Katherine, congratulating her upon her brother's acquittal. Cousin Azariah took a great fancy to Tom, and hinted at the possibility of making him his heir; he also advised his being sent to a first-class school. Tom now had money of his own with which to pay his school bills; and then, it was quite the thing to praise the boy. He was the hero of the town.

Mrs. Fielding wrote to Katherine, begging her to make her house in New York her future home, saying they all missed her sadly.

"I always loved Katherine," said Mrs. Fielding; "she is such an innocent, artless girl. It would be well for you to imitate her in some things, Sarah."

Katherine was now in independent circumstances. Her fortune, to be sure, was only moderate; but she had been trained in an economical school,

and ten thousand dollars was a great deal to her. It was freedom from distasteful labor; from the wretched feeling of dependency. It gave time and means to follow her tastes. She soon found it made the wide difference between "an artful, designing creature," and "that dear girl, Miss Seymour."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SONG OF PARTING.

"If maids be shy, he cures who can;
But if a man be shy — a man,
Why then the worse for him."

Soon after the trial Barron returned to New York. He steadfastly refused to be remunerated for leaving his business to defend Tom. He was Katherine's brother — that was sufficient for him. True to his fine sense of honor, he had not taken advantage of Katherine's gratitude. Now that his work in Linden Center was finished, he found that he loved her too well to remain long under the same roof without betraying his feelings. Therefore he bade her "good-bye," saying that business of importance called him back to the city.

"Probably she will be his wife the next time I see her," he said to himself, bitterly.

He lingered that whole bright Autumn week, hoping against hope, that something might occur

which would make her free. He was too loyal to take advantage of Challoner's absence, or Katherine's gratitude.

"She knows how deeply I love her," he thought, "and it is all in her hands."

He wondered Challoner did not come West during the brother's trial. Katherine had not told him the state of affairs; nor had Barron uttered one loving word to her since that night in the garden.

Katherine, at times, would think it must have been a dream. Had he really told her that he loved her? His manner toward her since had been more like that of a tender, elder brother, than of a lover. Ah! perhaps he had changed—perhaps he had repented having made that declaration. She longed to have him speak of that time, to have some re-assurance of his unchanging devotion. She could then tell him why Challoner had not come West. It would seem unwomanly for her to allude to the subject first. She feared it might seem challenging him to a new avowal of love. "He will surely speak again," she said to herself.

The evening before his departure they were

together alone in the parlor. Helen, with kind, womanly instinct, divined something of the situation, and found an excuse for leaving them.

The radiant sunset was fading away. It was twilight. The gloaming whispered like a spirit to each yearning heart, of the sorrowful future; the morrow would bring separation. Unconsciously they drew closer to each other, and for a moment all barriers seemed broken. Tom rushed into the room, bewailing the fact of Mr. Barron's near departure. Fate!

"Oh, Mr. Barron!" said the boy, "I thought you were going with me to shoot prairie chickens some time this week. I've just got a first-class shot gun, and cleaned up the old one for you"—then thinking he had failed in politeness, somehow, by making this speech, he added, apologetically—"Not but what the old one is better than nine out of ten"—then noticing that Barron made no reply, he feared that he had offended him, and continued: "But of course you are welcome to the new one, if you will stay, Mr. Barron; I did not think you would have any choice."

“Don’t you people want lights?” said Helen, just then coming in; and so the tender words remained unspoken.

He left Linden Center the following morning; and Mr. Edward Seymour, also, started for the East the same day. He urged Katherine to go back to New York; but she had been long parted from her brother and sister, and concluded to remain with them during the Winter.

Soon after Barron left, Helen found a rough copy of verses in Katherine’s writing. She read them thoughtfully. Her manner toward her sister afterward was more than usually kind, even pitying. The lines were the expression of passionate grief—Katherine’s unhappy love. It was

A SONG OF PARTING.

The mad, reckless strength of the storm has passed o’er.

No more that fierce pain in thy bosom abides;

Like the ebb of the waves from some wreck-covered shore,

The merciless sea of thy passion subsides;

Aye, subsides; but the ruin so carelessly wrought,

Shall remain while my life-blood throbs warm in each vein.

You but gathered the bloom of the love that you sought,

And left for my portion, the thorns and the pain.

That poor little boon of a woman's fond trust—
Ah, why did you seek the frail ghost of a joy,
But to find, at the last, 'twas but ashes and dust;
Then to fling it away like a child's broken toy.
If the proud wish to conquer, thou couldst not restrain,
Then rejoice and be glad — all opposing is done;
But the heart must be paltry could boast of such gain,
Or exult in a victory so cruelly won.

I'll not blame thee, or chide thee ; each soul has a room —
A dark, haunted chamber, all secret and still,
Where the shades of past actions rise up through the gloom,
And sad faces of wronged ones flock hither at will.
In the cold, solemn hours of the long winter night,
When the fire-light plays low on the shadowy wall,
Thou shalt gaze on the face that was once thy delight,
At the door of thy spirit shalt hear a voice call.

I have lived it all over — that brief time of bliss —
Ah, so often in slumber, though broken, still sweet;
And have trembled with joy, in my dreams, at your kiss,
And been sheltered again where I heard your heart beat;
Then awoke in the darkness, to weep o'er the grief
Of a heart that forever has lost its one joy,
And like Rachel of old, finds no hope, or relief,
While bereft of that gladness you make to destroy.

Thou hast turned a deaf ear to the words I would speak;
Sought to fathom my soul with a plummet and line;
Hast pronounced me but shallow and fickle and weak;
'Gainst the sum of thy judgment I will not repine.

'Tis, perhaps, better so, I loved thee too well.

I have made thee my hero, my king and my all :
And the stern, solemn words of a sacred book tell
How most certainly, surely, false idols must fall.

When over the village, all purely and clear,
The calm, Autumn moon sheds her beautiful light —
Best of all vanished scenes that my mem'ry holds dear —
Shines the sweet, by-gone spell of one far-away night.
Say, dost thou remember? One broad, silvery beam
Shone full on our faces. Thine eyes, close to mine,
Seemed to glow with the light of the spirit's glad dream,
And to burn with a radiance of love half divine.

Ah, hadst thou been kinder, no bleak wind of fate,
No chance, or condition of life, space or time,
Should have kept my true heart from its one only mate,
Or restrained my free soul from communion with thine.
Hadst thou wandered as distant as yon waning star,
Whose soft glory pierces the curtain of night,
I'd have followed and found thee, anear or afar,
And claimed a full share in thy grief or delight.

But 't is over, and past, as a tale that is told ;
And our life-paths glide onward, forever apart.
'T was a bitter, sweet time; but the world waxes cold.
Ah, farewell, and God bless thee wherever thou art!

Katherine felt that Barron had wronged her
deeply, in never alluding to the love which he

had confessed that night in the garden. Her woman's heart longed for re-assurance; not receiving it, she blushed with shame at her mad folly in ever allowing him to talk to her as he had, or in permitting so willingly the caresses he had lavished upon her then.

She felt humbled, pained, bewildered; and if, in her poem, she exaggerated her wrongs, it is not strange. The most ardently loving natures are also usually the proudest and most sensitive.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SPECIAL MEETINGS.

"Double, double, toil and trouble!"

It was a quiet Winter for Katherine. Each week a letter came from Challoner, who was with his invalid mother in Florida. He carefully ignored the fact of any misunderstanding between Katherine and himself. His letters were full of exquisite descriptions of places they were visiting, and tender love for Katharine. Keenly alive to the beautiful, his pictures of tropical scenery charmed her.

Still, Katherine had not forgotten Challoner's lack of loyalty during her time of trial.

The intellectual society of Linden Center was rather meager; and longing for congenial companionship, she found it no easy matter to resist the charm of Challoner's letters.

Her former life seemed drifted into the past, and with it, her old self.

Occasionally, a letter came from Lottie, telling of balls, new dresses and operas ; but they failed to interest her. Barron's name was rarely mentioned. Once, Lottie spoke of his having become a recluse, and working assiduously at his profession. Katherine's love for him was irresistible.

"I am going North in the Spring," writes Challoner, "and shall claim my bride."

This agitated Katherine, and she decided to write him a positive refusal to become his wife. When she sits down, her resolution wavers. She thinks: "He must love me, or he would never write such letters after my treating him so coldly. How hard it is to read men's hearts! Perhaps I am recklessly refusing the only sincere lover I have ever had!"

When the decisive letter was written and revised, it did not seem so harsh, after all.

Katherine's own heart was becoming as great a mystery to herself—as others had been ; and, as Winter wore away, she became discouraged with the puzzle and struggle of life.

Only once or twice during the season did she appear at any evening gatherings. When she did, the village belles considered her an intruder,

and never failed to criticise her unkindly. She was especially disliked by the elderly unmarried ladies of the place. A family of three sisters imposed upon themselves the task of reducing Katherine to what they deemed her proper position in the community. There came to Linden Center, in its earliest days, from what was then the far-off, fabulous East, three sisters—Harriet, Jane and Eliza Crocker, spinsters of uncertain age—the youngest thirty—the eldest over forty. The change of climate seemed to have given them a new lease of life. They scolded and gossiped energetically during the whole winter Katherine spent at Linden. When they came from the East, they brought with them several thousand dollars, which had been saved by the strictest economy. This was quite a fortune in Linden at that time, and they were much respected.

Beside these advantages, they possessed what was considered a “superior education;” they could “pa’s’e” any thing from a child’s primer to Pollok’s “Course of Time.” Cadmus-like they had had the honor of introducing letters to Linden. Miss Harriet had been the first school-mistress of the place. She was stern, firm, and

mathematical ; yet not proof against the wiles of Cupid. She surrendered her high calling the first Spring, and recklessly became the bride of Albert Smith, one of her oldest pupils.

Mrs. Albert Smith's sisters lived with her ; Albert was a flashy young man of convivial disposition. He soon squandered the little fortune of his wife and sisters-in-law, drinking and racing horses. After this they supported themselves by dress-making.

Smith was not exactly a fool ; but was cousin-germain. His wife and sisters exalted him, among themselves, to the position of Sir Oracle. "Al says so," settled any question, no matter how profound. He accepted all this feminine adoration as his due ; and drank, swore and raced horses till all was squandered.

To a person of fine sensibilities it was unbearable to hear their cracked voices, contradicting each other every moment, and the snipping of their scissors — snip ! — snip ! — snip ! They hated Katherine, and when she was the subject of conversation venom was the principal ingredient.

"Humph ! Katherine Seymour ! Who is she, anyhow ?" Miss Jane said. "Her father was a

desperate, drinkin' character, and she's got his disposition, only she covers it up. 'Like father, like daughter,' I say. Purty? Don't tell me she's purty;" snip, snip, snip, go the scissors. "What does rosy cheeks amount to, any way, even if she is purty, which I can't see. Mebby she knows how to make 'em red. Mebby mine 'ud be red if I painted 'em. She couldn't make a fine shirt to save her, and she puts on the airs of a queen. Wall, I guess Linden folks ain't afraid on her."

Mrs. Smith, just from the wash-tub, with a half-wrung towel in her hands, catches the conversation, and joins: "Katherine Seymour, eh? Oh, she's a high flyin' piece. She went right by the house, t'other day, without bowin', just as if we was dirt under her feet. Al says"—here Miss Jane, who had been talking along at an even pace, would raise her voice above her sister's.

HARRIET—"Al says"—

JANE, (in a high key)—"I guess folks 'll git sick of runnin' after Katherine Seymour 'fore the year's out."

HARRIET, (in a higher key)—"Al says he saw

her walkin' out with that lawyer chap from New York, and"—

JANE, (still louder)—“If folks don't git sick of runnin' after her afore the year's out, my name ain't Jane Crocker. Al says”—

HARRIET, (screaming)—Al says he can swear to it that he saw that feller from New York”—

A feeble, hollow voice from the door-way strikes in; it is Miss Eliza, who squeaks—“Al says he saw”—

JANE—“Liza, you go back to the kitchen. I smell that meat a burnin'.”

Eliza, a forlorn old creature, the eldest of the trio, beats a hasty retreat. She is feeble in mind and body, and seldom gets beyond “Al says,”—when her sisters frown her down. She is cook and scullery maid at the Smith-Crocker abode.

HARRIET, (continuing)—“He saw that feller from New York put his arm around her waist. What do ye think of such goin's on, hey?”

JANE, (poking a large lazy dog with a broom-handle)—“Git out, Spot!”

The above scene will convey an impression of the manner in which these women gossiped about Katherine.

Helen had been very poorly for a long time, and it was with apprehension Katherine saw her sister grow daily more feeble. Their mother had died of consumption, and Helen suffered from a distressing cough. Katherine feared that subtle disease might rob her of a sister. She told Mr. Gaylord her fears, and he called the family physician to examine her lungs.

Katherine's heart fluttered with fear as she watched him.

"You don't think she is consumptive, do you, doctor?" she said, as she followed him to the door.

"Well, Miss Katherine, I only wish it was June instead of January. The next two months will be hard upon her," was the careful reply.

A month after his first visit he said to Mr. Gaylord: "Your wife is like her mother; and if we can not help her soon, I am afraid she will go in the same way."

"Tell me what to do," said the anxious husband.

"She must go South very soon," answered the doctor.

"What do you say to New Orleans? She has relatives there."

"It is just the place; and if she has relatives there who will care for her properly, so much the better;" he added, as he drew on his gloves: "My advice would be to have her go next week."

Helen at first refused to be sent South upon such short notice; and declared it would require two months, at least, to prepare for the trip. At last, when she found her husband, the doctor, and Katherine, all inexorable, she said, as though raising an insuperable objection to the hasty departure: "I can not leave my child, and I know it would tire me fearfully to take her."

"Leave her with me," said Katherine. "I will take good care of her."

"You take care of her! You would soon weary of your bargain, Katherine."

"I will do any thing to restore your health, Helen."

Finally it was settled. Her sudden departure caused much comment in the small, gossip-loving community.

In vain Dr. Gardiner repeated that he had ad-

vised Mrs. Gaylord to go South. The scandal-mongers insisted that there was a great mystery about it.

"If there is not," they said, "why did she leave so suddenly, without telling even her nearest neighbors?"

Miss Jane Crocker was made happy, one morning, by an invitation to assist Mrs. Azariah Carr in finishing a quilt she had upon the frames.

"Now, I'm agoin' to see if Mis' Carr knows why Helen Gaylord went away so suddin," remarked Jane, as she tied up in a little bag a piece of chalk, a thinble, scissors, and a bit of twine.

She introduced the subject soon after her arrival at Cousin Lucinda's, as she warmed her feet in the oven of the kitchen stove, before going up stairs to the quilting.

Mrs. Carr was skimming milk in her pantry, that morning. She was the best butter-maker in the county, and frequently remarked that—"most folks didn't know how to skim milk. They'd put in half milk, and then wonder why their butter warn't as good as hers."

Upon this particular morning, Cousin Lucinda,

in her efforts to balance a pan of milk upon the edge of the stone churn, and keep her best glasses adjusted, found her mind fully employed, and gave absent-minded answers to Miss Crocker's questions. Had she noticed the eager expression of the questioner's face, she would have been more careful. Katherine now possessed money to maintain herself, and there was no danger of demands upon Azariah; she rather liked the girl, and would have been the last to say aught to injure her.

"What made Helen Gaylord go away so awful suddin?" she answered. "John thought Helen was goin' into consumption, so he made her go right away to New Orleans, though Helen didn't see how she could leave then, no how; but Kathie joined in, and told her she could keep house alone, just as well as not, and take care of Flossy; and so between John, Dr. Gardiner and Katherine, they sent her off."

Plash! went the cream into the churn, as Cousin Lucinda finished her milk skimming. Miss Crocker went up stairs shaking her head, and muttering: "Poor thing! so they sent her away, did they? No doubt Katherine Seymour

was glad to have her sister go away ; as for John Gaylord, wall, I never thought much of him, any how. Oh ! I see through it all, now ;" and Miss Crocker rubbed some chalk upon her twine, and thrust her needle into the quilt savagely.

Shortly after, Miss Crocker invited some friends to take tea with her, Miss Cark among the rest. At tea, the hostess informed the company that "Mrs. Azariah Carr had told all about Helen Gaylord's goin' off so suddin ;" and how "that artful little piece, Katherine Seymour, had jined in with her brother-in-law and the doctor, right agin her sister."

At this, there was a general shaking of heads, with sighs, and "did you evers?"

The scandal was started, and Linden Center was not the place to let it die.

At the "donation party," given shortly after, the story was that Helen Gaylord had parted from her husband, and left Linden, never to return ; that Katherine was the cause. She was "settin' her cap" for John, and had abused her sister shamefully. Sally Stubbs, Gaylord's hired girl, overheard Helen weeping bitterly, and begging John not to send her away ; but that Katherine joined

in, and said: "Pshaw! Helen, don't act so foolishly! You really must go."

Honest John Gaylord was devotedly attached to his wife. While he thought Katherine a very fine girl, he had the conviction that Mrs. Helen Gaylord was the flower of that family. He was so honorable that suspicion never haunted him. Katherine, however, had an uneasy feeling, caused by the looks of the neighbors when she appeared at church and other public places.

Although a strong religious feeling was deeply seated in Katherine's earnest nature, she had not "experienced" religion. But the reports brought home by Sally from the "special meetings," impressed Katherine very seriously, when in one of her thoughtful moods. So, when Mr. Gaylord spoke one evening of going to the church, she assented, trusting to find there peace and hope.

As they entered the church the congregation were singing "Rock of Ages," and the earnest voices touched Katherine's heart. She thought of her past trials, and said to herself: "Perhaps I needed all this to bring me nearer the Throne."

After the hymn, Deacon Mosely led in prayer. Katherine listened attentively, and said to herself:

"Others get great good here; why may not I?" When an aged woman arose, and told in piping voice how she "went out to milk her cow, and, lookin' up, saw a young lamb, all washed and shinin' white; and then fell a prayin' and groanin' in spirit; how the Lord had suddenly spoken unto her, and told her to rejoice, for her sins were forgiven," Katherine could find no comfort in the old lady's long story, although while repeating it, shouts of "Amen," "Bless the Lord," and "Glory to God," came from various parts of the room. Katherine had never attended "special meetings," and the method of conducting services were very novel to her. She was uncomfortable, and the whole affair jarred on her religious conceptions. She told John she was ready to go home, long before the meeting was over.

"Did you get 'converted,' my sister? or, were you only afraid you should, that you wanted to come away so early?" said John Gaylord.

"No," she answers gravely, "I was only afraid of being disenchanted. Somehow, every thing there grated upon me. I may not have been in the right mood. I did not like the 'leaders.' When Mrs. Walton said so confidently she knew

Jesus loved her, that her soul was safe, and that she did — oh, how she did — ‘love all God’s precious little ones, and hoped many of them would be gathered into His fold’ — to hear such expressions from such people, affected me very unpleasantly. It made me feel wicked, and I don’t wish to feel so.”

She was almost ready to weep over her disappointment. It seemed to her that night, as if truth was very hard to find, and shams so easy.

“I knew you would not like it,” said her brother-in-law, “although you were enthusiastic when we started; but allow me to say, Kathie: Don’t lose faith in a great and loving Father, because some of his children fall so far short of your ideal Christian.”

“Yes, John, I know all that; but I am afraid I shall never have a change of heart — I mean the kind of change they spoke of to-night.”

“Don’t trouble yourself about that, child. You try to do your duty?”

“Oh, yes.”

“And you trust in God, and strive to keep his commandments?”

“Yes; but, somehow, that is not enough.”

“I admit that it is not; but keep on doing the best you can, and the change will come. You may not have any sudden or special revelation, or go through the entire Christian experience — anxiety, conviction, and at last arrive at a self-righteous conception of your own perfections — all in the short space of three days.”

“Oh, John, you must not talk so. I have no doubt they are far better than we.”

In her own little room Katherine prayed earnestly that night. She prayed that God would lead her tired feet safely into the right path. She did not attend the meetings again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DEMANDING AN EXPLANATION.

"Trust me not at all, or all in all."

Jane Crocker had taken an active part in the meetings. She sat behind Mr. Gaylord and Katherine that evening, and when the young girl left church, she grasped Miss Cark's arm.

"Just look!" she whispered; "did you ever see such goin's on in all your life, Maria? I wonder the brazen-faced thing dares show her face in a meetin' house. I should think she'd find it gettin' too hot for her here, and want to leave. Did you see her take his arm, as cool and familiar as you please? I should think her poor sister's ghost would haunt her; and it will if Helen Gaylord dies from grief at the way she's been treated. I wish Elder Lowbridge had spoken right out in meetin' to 'em, don't you? I wonder how the Seymour grit would have stood that? There! I've been talkin' so much, I've clean missed the

hymn Brother Mosely gin out. What was it, Maria? 'Blest be the tie that binds?' No, that ain't it. It's 'Sweet hour of prayer.' I've got it now;" and she joins in singing the beautiful hymn in a shrill voice.

Miss Crocker carried home to her sisters the startling information that "Katherine Seymour came to prayer meetin' with her brother-in-law, and left before meetin' was out, just as we was singin' the second hymn. I declare, it riled me up so, to see her walk in beside John Gaylord, the artful thing! and there her poor sister is sent off, goodness knows where! It riled me up so, I could scarcely hear a word Elder Lowbridge said."

Harriet and Eliza agreed that Katherine's conduct was outrageous. "Al says that girl ought to be put down," said Harriet.

"Yes, I say so, too," said Jane; "but who's a goin' to try it? I'd like awful well to give her a piece of my mind; law! it wouldn't hurt her a mite, though. She'd only give me a scornful look, and carry her head higher'n ever."

"I wonder why somebody don't speak to Gaylord, and tell him folks are talkin' about his pay-

in' her so much attention. If I was Al, I'd do it to-morrow," said Harriet.

"Oh! I wouldn't do that," said Jane. "Why, Gaylord would be awful mad; he thinks Katherine Seymour is a regular saint."

"Well, then, why couldn't some one write to that beau of hers, and tell him of her goin's on? It's somebody's Christian duty to write him. She's always makin' fun of old maids. May be she'll be one herself, if she ain't keerful. What is her beau's name, any how?"

"Why, she writes to a feller named Frank Challoner; he lives in Florida. Leastways, Sally Stubbs had a letter she was carryin' to the post-office, when she stopped in here, t'other day; and she couldn't make out the address, to save her life. I read it for her. It was 'Mr. Frank Challoner, Jacksonville, Florida.'"

"Why, I thought she liked that Barron who was out here, last Fall, 'tendin' to Tom Seymour's trial," said Jane.

"Mebby she did like him; and mebbly she couldn't git him," was the answer.

"Sally Stubbs said she used to dress up awful fine for him, every day, when he was out here;

and after he left, her eyes were red with cryin', for a week; and she didn't eat nothin', and staid in her room, with the door locked."

"Is that so? Why in the world didn't you tell me that before? You never tell me nothin', Jane."

"Well, it's my opinion that some one ought to tell 'em how she's actin'."

"But ain't it a State's-prison crime to write a letter and not sign no name to it?" asked Eliza, timidly. "You don't want to get no sheriff after ye, Jane."

"Pshaw! s'pose it is. Who's goin' to know about it, if you don't go and tell of it yourself?" answers Jane.

"Mebby she'll be an old maid herself, yet," muttered Miss Crocker, as she sat in her room composing the following letter:

MR. FRANK CHALLONER:

DEAR SIR:—Knowing that you are paying attention to a young lady who lives in this town—Katherine Seymour by name—I consider it my Christian duty to write and inform you of the manner in which she is acting. She has lately been the cause of serious trouble between Mrs. Gaylord, her sister, and that sister's husband. She has persuaded him to send his wife away from home, although Mrs.

Gaylord wept and pleaded with her about it. Besides this, she has now the boldness to come with him to the house of God. She was at prayer-meeting with him on Wednesday evening; but got ashamed of herself, I am glad to say, and left before the meetin' was over. I saw this with my own eyes. Would she be apt to make any honorable man a good wife?

I write this to you as a friend. I have nothing against her, but should hate to see an honest man deceived by her. No doubt she has fooled you, as she has many others before you.

Now, dear sir, you will repent it bitterly, if you do not heed this letter, and be warned in time, by one who knows what she is sayin'. I hope you will not be deceived.

FROM AN UNKNOWN, BUT TRUE FRIEND.

Barron received an exact copy of this letter. Miss Crocker had determined to do her work faithfully.

The manner in which these letters were received was illustrative of the different character of the men. Challoner's feeling, after first reading it, was that of angry disgust. That any one should dare to write him — Frank Challoner — an anonymous letter, concerning the young lady he intended to make his wife. "Confound their impertinence!" he muttered, as he walked home that day.

"Frank, dear," said his mother, as he came into the room where she was sitting, "what has happened to you? You are angry about something, I know."

"Yes, I am angry, and have good reason to be," he answered.

He was moody all day.

"Why is it Kathie is always getting involved with low people?" he thought; "people who write anonymous letters, for instance. There must be some reason for it. Other young ladies do not have such troubles. Fancy any one daring to write an anonymous letter about Nellie. I am afraid Katherine will be always causing these sensations, even after we are married, and there is nothing I dread like a sensation. I feel uncomfortable about that letter, although I don't believe one word of it. It is not like her. No doubt the letter was written by some spiteful old spinster."

Try as he would to dismiss it, it still haunted him; and he felt a certain unjust anger against Katherine. The sentence which said she had been fooling him, hurt most; he was naturally jealous. "*Honi soit, qui mal y pense*," had

never been a favorite motto, any more than "Charity thinketh no evil." The thought that he might possibly be the trusting dupe of a clever young girl, nearly maddened him. He wandered restlessly about for a week, and then astonished his mother, one morning, by declaring his intention to start North the following day.

He arrived at Linden Center in February. He had not apprised Katherine of his intended visit, thinking, if there was any truth in the letter, he would best discover it by surprising her.

It was washing-day at Linden Center, and Katherine was sweeping the sitting-room, when she saw a carriage stop at the gate, and a gentleman springing lightly out, came up the walk. After her first surprise at so early a visitor, she recognized Frank, and went to receive him. He tried to be cordial and natural, but it was difficult. Suspicions tortured him. They talked upon common subjects, as people do who have not met for a long time. He described his journey; spoke of the severe cold weather, and how keenly he felt it, coming directly from the South. At last, with his eyes upon the floor, he made an effort to appear natural, and said :

"Where is your sister, Katherine?"

"She is in New Orleans. Did I not write you about her going South for her health?"

"I think not."

"I am sure I wrote you about it."

"Then I never received the letter."

"Oh, quite possible I did not, after all. I meant to do so. I am sometimes absent-minded," she answered, pleasantly.

"And why did you not go with her?"

This was said anxiously, and she saw that he was cross-questioning.

"I was obliged to stay and take care of Flossy, and keep house for my brother-in-law and Tom."

"Ah! I am very sorry you remained here, Katherine."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't think you can blame me, Katherine, for having strange thoughts, under such circumstances."

"Explain what you mean by 'strange thoughts,' please."

He answered by taking Miss Crocker's letter from his pocket and giving it to her. "Read it,"

he said, "and then see if you can blame me for being unhappy."

She read the letter quietly, betraying no emotion of surprise or pain; when she came to the middle part, a deep flush covered her cheeks; a feeling of indignation arose within her.

Challoner, watching, thought it a blush of conscious guilt. At last she raised her eyes; the look made him feel very uneasy; never more so, in all his well-bred, self-possessed life. In the depths of those clear eyes, he saw there was a smouldering fire. At last it faded, as did the scarlet from her cheek, leaving her deathly pale. Then came an expression of supreme contempt.

"For Heaven's sake, do not look at me so. Can you blame me for feeling anxious, after receiving that letter?"

She had grown calmer, and answered coldly:

"Do you believe the contents of that letter? The question seems almost unnecessary, as you have already answered it by your manner."

"I—can't say I believe all; but—"

"You either believe it, or you do not."

"I will tell you frankly what I think. You

must have acted indiscreetly, to say the least, or no one would have dared to write so."

"Mr. Challoner, I will be as candid as yourself. You remember our difference in the garden at Hillsdale, and your manly advice at that time? I see by your face that you have not forgotten. You know that I released, or offered to release you from your engagement; but you would not accept it. Now you come to ask an explanation — an explanation of what? — of a vile, slanderous letter, sent you by an unknown enemy of mine.

"I refuse to explain any thing. To any manly lover, that letter would explain itself — the work of malice. Do you not realize the injustice you are doing me — the insult you heap upon me, by your shameful doubt? Do you think I can endure such things? that I would venture to place my future happiness in the hands of a man who has so little stability — so little trustfulness? Twice, and in times of my sorest need, you have proved selfish, cowardly and faithless. Do not speak, please!"

"Katherine," he cried, "you will repent having so wronged me."

"I shall surely repent, if I rely on a single

one of those vows with which you were so prodigal when all was fair."

She stepped into an adjoining room, and went to the little box where she kept his letters, and offered him the package.

"I refuse to take them," he said, "and shall not believe what you say while in your present mood."

"If you will not accept, I can burn them," she said quietly.

This was more than Challoner could endure. Looking round for his hat, he arose to go.

Little Flossy, arch-queen of mischief, during the lover's abstraction, had carried his carefully-brushed beaver into the kitchen, and filled it with soap-suds from Sally's wash-tub. Katherine found her busily blowing soap-bubbles from it with an old pipe. The little creature was supremely happy—still as a mouse, and busy as a bee.

The hat was ruined. The entire situation was so absurd that, heart-sick as Katherine was, she could not help laughing at the picture Flossy made. She seized the hat, emptied the dirty water, and tried to dry it—all in vain; it was ruined. Car-

rying it into the sitting-room, she tried to explain why it was wet; but Challoner's dignified manners, and the whole ridiculous affair, were too much for her composure.

She had been sorely tried that morning, and was in the mood when one will laugh or cry on the slightest provocation.

Challoner's look of angry surprise made the affair seem more comical to Katherine; and, dropping into a chair, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into subdued laughter.

Ridicule was something to which Challoner was peculiarly sensitive. Taking the ruined hat, he bowed low.

"I have the honor to wish you good-bye, Miss Seymour. I am glad to leave you in so happy a humor," he said haughtily.

When she looked up, he was gone.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SEEN THROUGH A CLOUD.

Barron found Miss Crocker's letter upon his office table one morning. Looking closely, he saw that it was from Linden Center, and that the address was in a strange hand. A great dread came over him. Perhaps Katherine was ill. Alas! what if she should die!

He hesitated long before opening the letter. At last, saying with a sad smile, "It is more probable she is married, and has sent me her wedding cards," he opened the envelope. Walking to the window, and holding it close to his eyes, he tried to read; but the writing was fine, and not very plain, and the words seemed blurred.

"Read this first," he said to his clerk, as the young man took a package of unopened letters from a table, and prepared to read them. During the Winter his eyes had troubled him very much. An eminent physician said they must have entire

rest, as the optic nerve was diseased ; therefore he had not read even his private correspondence for months, nor taken pen in hand, save to sign his name. It was a heavy cross. His restless nature required constant employment, to prevent it preying upon itself ; and especially now, when his life, viewed in the light of his great disappointment, seemed a waste.

Work had been his one panacea. He was moody, easily irritated at times, greatly changed.

“ Well, why don’t you read ? ” he asked, impatiently, as the clerk hesitated. “ It is not written in Greek or Sanscrit, is it ? ”

“ I fear you will be very angry, sir, at the contents of this letter,” said the young man, timidly.

“ Well, it is mine ! Why don’t you read, and not talk about it ? ” The clerk hesitated no longer. Barron listened, making no audible comment ; but his face grew white. He requested the clerk to read it over again ; then, taking it from him, thrust it into the blazing fire, and said :

“ Let this be the last of that, Gray,” as he watched Miss Crocker’s carefully written letter

in flames. "It is infamous! The person who wrote that deserves hanging. You may leave me alone now."

"Now I see why Mr. Barron goes so little into society," said the clerk to himself. "This young lady out West is nearer than a mere friend to him."

Left alone, Barron paced restlessly up and down his office. "Poor little girl!" he said, sadly; "she has a bitter enemy in the writer of that letter; how very strange that they should write to me. I wonder if they wrote to Challoner. If they did, he is just the man to let it annoy and alarm him. The vile slander! I should like to know who wrote it. I might write Katherine — poor, innocent darling! — and warn her against an enemy. But I could not without explaining all this, which might appear as if I believed it. She is so sensitive. No! I will not let her know any thing about it. Probably whoever wrote it knows nothing of her engagement with Challoner, or they would not have written to me. My poor darling! How my heart yearns! How I long to comfort you in all your trials! Alas! why have I not the right to protect you? Can any one love

you as I do? Will they cherish you as I would?"

Long ago she had given him a miniature of herself. It had been his constant companion ever since. Taking it from its resting-place near his heart, he walked to the window and gazed long and tenderly upon that face. There was a look of strained intensity in his eyes, but the picture looked dim as if seen through a mist. He could scarcely discern the well-loved features. The sorrowful truth dawned upon him with new meaning. His sight was failing rapidly each day. Returning the picture to its place, he bowed his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to passionate grief and despair.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DRIFTING APART.

"Lift, oh, lift, thou lowering sky,
And thou canst thy blue regain ;
An thou canst not, he and I
Need not part for drops of rain."

A great sorrow has fallen upon Barron. He is in the consulting-room of a celebrated oculist, who has just given an opinion regarding Barron's eyes.

"He bears it like a hero," the doctor says to himself, and continues aloud : "It is almost impossible to reach the optic nerve, and that is where the disease is located ; while I can not say there is much hope, I have heard of this disease being cured. I would not deceive you by saying recovery is even probable in your case. I have told you the worst, as you requested. You should have stopped work one year ago, Mr. Barron ; you must have absolute rest."

Barron smiles, as the doctor says he must have complete rest. It is a sad smile.

"My finding 'complete rest' on earth!" Barron says inaudibly. "I should like rest — perfect rest—the rest that one finds under the green turf."


There is a tear in the doctor's sympathetic gray eye, as he watches his patient out of sight.

"I call that courage," he said. "A man of his restless ambition—in the very midst of a brilliant career—learns he is in danger of becoming totally blind, yet bears up under it and never winces. By Jove! the Spartans are not all dead yet. Ah! this is a hard world."

Barron walks straight from the doctor to his office, and throws himself on a lounge, crying in despair.

"I may live ten, twenty, thirty years yet. My God! I can not bear it! I shall go mad! Jack," he says, as a magnificent brown setter comes up slowly and rests his head on the lounge near his master, looking sadly in his face, "old fellow, I do believe you are sorry for me. You and I will cross the ocean together."

Three weeks later, as the stately "Ocean Queen" left New York, she numbered among her passengers Hartley Barron, George Grey, his



clerk and traveling companion, and "Jack," his trusty friend.

Early in the Spring, Helen Gaylord returned, much benefited from her Southern trip. She noticed the unhappy expression which had settled on Katherine's face lately.

"Tell me your trouble, child! I may help you," said Helen; and Katherine told her all.

After telling the story, Katherine began to weep.

"I did not know you loved Frank Challoner so much," said Helen.

"It is not my love for him that troubles me; but I fear Mr. Barron was also written in the same way, by whoever my enemy may be. I am so very unhappy here! I can not remain where people say such things about me, false though they are. O Helen! let me go back to Hillsdale!"

"You shall go soon, Katherine. I know you will never be contented here. I will write aunt Emily to-night; so be cheerful, dear!"

One bright Spring day they visited the home-

stead. How familiar every path seemed to Katherine! As they rode through the slough before coming to the locust avenue, Katherine looked down and saw the wet green grass, starry with cowslip blooms, just as of old. Birds were singing, and she could fancy Tom and herself again in childhood, with surroundings unchanged.

When they had driven through the avenue, and were upon the open space before the house, she realized it was no longer the old home—it had passed into the hands of strangers.

Mr. Dalgren had converted the brown house into an ornamental stable, and was building a handsome residence, where he could entertain his city friends during the hunting season.

In the garden Katherine found the rose bushes her mother planted years ago. Many of the old-fashioned flowers she and Tom had planted, when children, were budding in the same beds. The orchard was in bloom, and she visited Tom's favorite tree. Mr. Dalgren had left many of the old land-marks of rustic beauty. Katherine thought him less a Vandal when she found these spots of sacred memory. As they rode back, their quiet manner was evidence that the

visit revived the pleasure and sadness of the past.

Edward Seymour and Mrs. Fielding are at Hillsdale this Summer; Sarah and Lottie are with them.

Lottie is soon to be married to Harry Featherstone. Sarah looks happy and bright; she, too, is engaged to be married. Her betrothed is a wealthy, middle-aged banker, devotedly fond of her.

Mrs. Fielding has resolved to take Katherine under her own management, now that Sarah and Lottie are well provided. She had never borne any real dislike toward the girl; although once Katherine seemed to stand in the way of her ambition for Sarah.

"I never was so happy in my life, Kathie! You know I always admired Harry," said Lottie, the night after Katherine's arrival, then blushed at her own enthusiasm. Katherine stopped brushing her hair, and kissed her cousin affectionately.

"I am so glad, for your sake," said Katherine, kindly. Then hesitatingly asked: "Does Mr. Barron call upon you often, Lottie?"

"No, poor fellow! He did not call once after his great misfortune. He is in Europe, now," was the answer.

"Why do you say 'poor fellow,' Lottie?"

"Because he is blind, or very nearly so; there is but little hope of his recovering his sight, although he has gone to some great German establishment, where they make diseases of that nature a specialty, and say they can cure every body, you know."

"He is true to me," was the hope which rose in Katherine's heart. When alone, that night, her thoughts were across the ocean. Now she knew the cause of his silence.

"My proud, noble love!" she thought; "why did you not let me know? Could you doubt my perfect love? Why am I not with you, to comfort and help you in this hour of darkness?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

SO VERY IMPRACTICAL.

"All the world I rove,
Seeking still for thee.
Do thy glance and hand
Wait for me?"

"We will go to Saratoga."

After announcing this decision, Mrs. Fielding looks at her niece, who is sewing by the window. They are all together in the parlor at Hillsdale — the newly married couples, who have just returned from their wedding tour, Mrs. Fielding, and Katherine.

It is a warm day, not a breath of air stirring the maple leaves. The sun, shining through the branches, makes the lawn a piece of quaint mosaic. A spicy scent from the clove pinks and late roses comes in at the open window, touching Katherine's heart with a feeling of pleasure, strangely mingled with pain, as her thoughts carry her back to last Summer. At Mrs. Fielding's remark, she looks up in surprise.

“Why, Aunt Fielding, I thought you liked Hillsdale, your loose wrappers, your novel and after-dinner nap. What pleasure or comfort can you possibly find at Saratoga?”

“Yes, I like the freedom and quiet of Hillsdale for myself,” said Mrs. Fielding, “and it is certainly very warm; but there are duties toward you which I have never forgotten, though circumstances have made it appear at times as if I had. My dear, you must be properly introduced into society — launched, I may say, on the stream of fashionable life. You have youth and beauty, and money enough to enable you to dress well. Your chief want now is a *chaperone*; one who thoroughly understands her duty as well as her responsibility, and has tact. I admit that it will be something of a sacrifice for me to leave here now; but whatever my shortcomings may be, I am not in the habit of neglecting duty for personal ease. You have seen very little of the fashionable world, my dear. I don’t know as I am sorry, for your freshness will be the more charming. Did I tell you I had received a letter from aunt Caroline Allen, Lottie?”

"You did not mention it to me," answered Lottie, who was embroidering a most elaborate pair of slippers for her husband.

"I presume you hardly know who I mean by 'aunt Caroline Allen,'" continues Mrs. Fielding, resuming her conversation with Katherine. "She is your great-aunt—your grand-mother Seymour's sister. She married a wealthy Baltimore gentleman, who left her a fortune, when he died, some ten years ago. She is a delightful old lady, and is intending to spend a few weeks at Saratoga, with Major Allen. The Allens are one of the first families in Baltimore, in wealth and blood. Aunt Caroline desires me to come to Saratoga while she is there, and I shall take you with me, Kathie."

"How kind you are, Aunt Fielding," cries Katherine, her face flushing with surprise and pleasure. No young girl could accept a proposition to visit Saratoga, entirely unmoved, even when her heart is "over the sea." Music, dancing, new dresses, fresh scenes and faces, never lose their charm until we are past twenty-five.

Fanning herself languidly, Mrs. Fielding con-

tinues: "I think we had better begin your dresses early next week." Thus was it settled.

Katherine soon finds herself amid the brilliant society which yearly gathers at this most fashionable of American watering-places; drinking disagreeable mineral waters, listening to fine music, chatting with sages and fools, invalids and athletes, the refined and vulgar, buoyant youth and expectant middle age — and mingling in the dance, as though her heart had never known a sorrow.

"Miss Seymour, my nephew, Major Allen," said aunt Caroline Allen, a stately old lady, one evening; and Katherine bows to a tall, soldierly man, with a kind face.

It was soon arranged by the agreeable old aunt and managing niece, that Major Allen should accompany Miss Seymour during her drives and promenades. This tall major knew how to be very agreeable, and when you knew him well, his calm face grew very pleasant. Several times Katherine noticed it brighten with interest. His nature is a rarely noble one. The two aunts, meanwhile, looked upon the young people complacently, and praised the merits

and virtues of their respective nephew and niece.

"My nephew, Major Allen," remarks aunt Caroline, "is a brave man, and his principles are so different from those of most men. He is the soul of honor, my dear — the soul of honor."

"I quite agree with you," answers Mrs. Fielding. "I like him exceedingly. He must be nearly thirty; and, of course, is engaged."

"No, he is not engaged. James has paid little attention to ladies; but he seems to admire Miss Seymour."

"Oh, yes; she has been much admired," Mrs. Fielding answers proudly. "Katherine is an unusual girl, and has had several offers of marriage, young as she is; but she ought to marry some one who has both fortune and position. One, without the other, would be very unsatisfactory to me."

Meantime, the young people became warm friends. The elastic spirits of youth began to reassert themselves in Kathie. Her old brightness returned, and she grew daily more charming. She forgot for a time to live in dreams. To complete happiness, the supreme joy of love is only wanting in Katherine's heart. The hero of seven-

ral battles—the soldier who has never surrendered sword—is entirely humbled. His heart capitulates without terms to this “little prairie flower,” as he was pleased to call her.

“Why, Katherine! I don’t see what you could have been thinking of, to refuse Major Allen. You have not refused him. You are not in earnest. Don’t you thank me, now, for not letting you marry before? How would it suit you to be the wife of a blind man? Only think, how miserable! and Barron will be obliged to give up business. He is not very wealthy, you know. I am sure I acted for the best, Katherine,” said Mrs. Fielding, when she discovered the major’s love for her niece.

It was the first time she had mentioned the “diplomacy” she had exercised in New York. The remark jarred upon Katherine. Her indignation gave her courage to inform Mrs. Fielding that she had refused Major Allen’s offer of marriage.

“Oh!” groaned Mrs. Fielding, “are all girls fools? It does seem as though they were. I have had trouble enough with my own. Thank Heaven! they are settled in life at last. I do

hope you have not allowed yourself to pine over Hartley Barron all this time. You look guilty. I do believe you love that unfortunate man yet. If so, I regret that you have deceived me so long. Had I known it, I should not have taken upon myself all this trouble and expense. You are a very strange girl, if not a very ungrateful one."

Mrs. Fielding was growing angry.

"I never meant to deceive you," answered Katherine, "and you need not be troubled about Mr. Barron, for he does not care for me now. He had an opportunity to tell his love for me, if he had any, last Fall. I think him the noblest of the few noble men it has been my misery and pleasure to meet. If I knew that he loved me, were he blind, deaf and lame, I should be the happiest of girls, and the proudest, too."

"Indeed!" was Mrs. Fielding's reply. "We had better return to Hillsdale. Perhaps in a year's time, you may regain your senses. I deeply regret that you deceived me, and so openly encouraged Major Allen, only to break his heart, in return for all his kindness and devotion. I always thought you a strange girl. From this time forth, I shall not trouble myself about you

rest assured. I am thankful for one thing: my conscience is clear. I have done my duty as well as you would allow me. Your conduct is past my understanding."

Katherine was weeping. It grieved her to be called ungrateful, or deceitful.

"What did you tell the major this morning?" asked Mrs. Fielding.

"I told him that I did not love him well enough to marry him, although I respected him very much, and prized his friendship, and was grateful for all his kindness to me."

"Well, what did he say then?"

"He said he was willing to wait until I could love him; that he thought he could win my love some time; that he wished I would think it all over calmly and conscientiously, and not give him my final answer just now."

"Oh! so you are still encouraging him? I thought you refused his offer."

"I did, at first; then he pleaded with me, and I told him I would consider it; but I am quite sure my answer will be the same. Oh! I am always in trouble," sobbed Katherine. "Do let me go back to Hillsdale. I don't want to stay

here any longer. Why could he not remain my friend, just as he was? I needed a friend, one whom I could trust, so much."

"Friend! Fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Fielding, impatiently. "I know what such friendships always lead to, and so do you, Katherine."

"Aunt Fielding, don't blame me, for I am a most wretched girl."

"Yes, and when you might just as well be one of the happiest, and most honored. Think what a brilliant future you would have as his wife. I wish you were a little more practical, and less poetical. You are too visionary for this life, any way."

"I have been told so ever since I was a child; the advice I have received has not helped me much, so far. You may make me miserable, but you can not make me practical—that is, in the way you mean; and I don't know as I desire to be so. All the small-souled people I have ever known have had it said of them as their chief recommendation—I almost hate the word.

"Is not every great project first in the form of a thought, a dream, or a vision, long before it

assumes shape? Any thing unusual is called impractical by common people. Columbus, in his day, was a visionary fool. We must have practical people, I admit; but if we ever reach the higher realms of thought, art, or science, it will be through the dreams of this visionary class of men."

"I can not say that I understand your odd remarks; but you are growing excited and unladylike. I have tried to do my duty toward you, and I am sure you will regret not having taken my advice. To-morrow we will return to Hillsdale;" and Katherine was left alone.

She was, indeed, a puzzle to Mrs. Fielding. Her independence of thought and feeling were strangely at variance with her otherwise yielding disposition.

"She must be like her mother, in her queer notions," sighed Mrs. Fielding. "The Seymours, as a race, are remarkably successful, and there is something about this girl which will prevent her ever being so—even with her beauty and talent. She is almost eccentric sometimes—eccentric women are dreadful. The idea of her clinging to Hartley Barron as she does! It is

absurd. Because he has been so unfortunate to lose his eyes, it need not follow that she should wreck her life by marrying him to show her loyalty. Circumstances change in this life, and we must follow them. How different are Hartley Barron's prospects now to what they were when Katherine first met him. He would have been a brilliant match for any girl then ; what a blessing that my Sarah did not marry him ! ”

She still had Hugh on whom she could exercise her ability and desire for match-making ; but that young gentleman proved quite as refractory as Katherine, and insisted upon paying his attentions to a saucy little girl, whose mother was a boarding-house landlady, near the stately mansion of the Fieldings. Think of it, gentle reader, and drop a tear of pity over poor Mrs. Fielding's afflictions.

Katherine was contented, although not quite happy, in Hillsdale ; and spent much of her time out of doors, in long, lonely rambles through the fragrant pine woods. She had written several little poems, which, if they possessed no particular merit, served to keep her mind from brooding over a painful subject.

Tom was being prepared for college, under the instruction of a clergyman friend of his uncle Edward, who lived near Hillsdale. Katherine and Lenore would often drive over to see him. One fine day in late Summer, while returning from one of these visits, Katherine's heart sang this little pæan, prompted by the glorious weather and picturesque scenery through which they were passing :

LATEST SUMMER.

Ah! Summer time, sweet Summer time,
Too soon your scepter you must yield.
I know it by the paler skies,
And bare, brown stubble field;
By the tall ranks of golden-rod,
Peering the wayside fences over;
By swarms of yellow butterflies,
Flitting above the sweet, red clover;
By distant reaches 'twixt the hills,
Embathed in shadowy amethyst;
Wild, purple morning-glory blooms,
And splendid sunset — morning mist;
By dainty boats of thistle-down,
Floating upon ærial seas;
By here and there a scarlet leaf
Upon the yellowing maple trees.

By cricket's chirp and plover's cry;
 And shrill-voiced cat-bird's lazy calling
Soon, soon, will Autumn breezes blow,
 And set the leaves a-falling.
But now, ere frost has dimmed the flowers,
 Or on the forest laid his hand,
There comes a tranquil time of peace,
 A sweet enchantment o'er the land
As though, once more, the golden age
 Of peaceful labor, love and mirth,
Had come from out the classic past,
 And smiled upon the waiting earth
And oh! the soul, the poet soul,
 Which for this time hath waited long,
Joyfully feels the heavenly thrill,
 And breaks out into tender song

CHAPTER XXX.

BETROTHAL.

"But, for the general award of love,
The little sweet doth kill much bitterness."

Another year has gone its busy round of days, bringing happiness to some, mourning to others, changes to all, and, once more, bright Summer weather.

Katherine is upon the broad piazza of the old house at Hillsdale. There is an open letter upon her lap, which she has been reading:

NEW YORK, June 10

DEAR FRIEND:—I have just returned from Europe, and met Featherstone, who told me you were at Hillsdale.

I am going soon to Merton, and would like to call upon you. I can not bear to go so near the place where I spent six pleasant weeks, one never-to-be-forgotten Summer, without seeing it again, especially when I find you are there. So, with your kind permission, I will drive over from Merton Tuesday evening.

If you prefer I would not come, a note to that effect will find me at Merton.

With kind regards to all, and hoping to see you soon, I remain
Your sincere friend,

HARTLEY BARRON.

This is all. It is quite enough to make her very happy. She reads it again, although she knows every word of its contents, already.

“Poor fellow!” she sighs. “It is written in a strange hand. He is so sensitive about his blindness. He does not mention the matter here, but of course he can not have been cured, or he would have written the note himself. Tuesday evening—oh, my love! my hero! he will soon be here.”

Walking into the garden, she breaks off a tea-rose for her hair. She thinks of his blindness with a sigh—the dear eyes, whose sight has vanished “like lights blown out, o’er melancholy seas.”

“Brave, kind eyes! they will never brighten at seeing me again,” she murmurs, with tears of pity in her own; but there is a flush of happy expectation upon her cheek, in spite of the tear

and the sigh. "He is coming! He is coming!" her very heart-throbs seemed to say.

Slowly the purple shadows around the mountains deepen and darken. The sun sets in splendor. The birds in the maple trees twitter sleepily, as they nestle cosily for the night. It is quite dusk.

She can not stay in doors—there is a tumult in her veins. She has thrown a light shawl around her, and is pacing up and down the garden walk, listening to the whip-poor-will softly calling. Three times have the plaintive notes been heard, when Katherine's heart gives a great bound of joy, so intense as to be almost pain.

Some one has opened the gate, and there is a manly step upon the graveled walk. Nearer came the footsteps—nearer, nearer. She feels a strong desire to run away, but a stronger desire to look again upon that manly face, which has not shone upon her, except in dreams, for two long years.

He had passed through the house, and is close to her now. He takes both her trembling hands in his own. He tells her in a voice, which falters with strong feeling, of the pleasure he feels in being in his native land once more; "and, of all

places in my native land, this garden is the dearest," he says. "Heaven bless it! May its flowers always bloom. May sunshine and rain make it the fairest spot on earth. It is a garden of Eden to me, darling, since I find you here to-night, my life! my love! my all! at last. Do you remember that long-ago night, when I first told you how I loved you? and then, alas! cast aside all hope, as one who jumps from a burning ship into a boatless sea. I wished to act honorably, though God knows I was sorely tempted to do otherwise. To - night, I come to claim you — never again to surrender you to any one, I trust. Tell me that you love me, Katherine, once more. I wish to be sure I am not dreaming. It is difficult to realise such bliss."

Her heart beats too violently to speak. His strong arms enfold her; she does not shrink from the embrace. He feels that he is answered. Both hearts are full. LOVE, held by the slender, silken cords of FAITH, has triumphed!

"Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
Unknown to any, free from whispering tale,"

They sit together — the moon and stars peep out

— the evening is nearly over, although to them it seemed but a few moments. Love conquers Fate and Time. Barron and Katherine sit close to each other.

“And in that hurtle of united souls,
The mystic motions, which in common moods,
Are shut beyond our sense, broke in on us;
And as we sat, we felt the old earth spin,
And all the starry turbulence of worlds
Swing round us in their audient circles.”

The moon is full now, and the whip-poor-will sings less sadly, it seems to them, for their hearts are full of happiness.

“We really must go in, Katherine,” says Barron, gently. “Your aunt will blame me, and with good reason, for keeping you out so long in the damp evening air. I found her in the parlor when I came, and she told me where you were. I hurried out, for I wanted to tell you of my unconquerable love, here — the place where I first learned that you returned my love. Oh, how magnet-like my heart has ever turned to the memory of that night, in the face of the conviction that honor demanded full renunciation! How

often have I dreamed of meeting you, yet all hope was clouded. When I went away I supposed you would soon marry Challoner. When Featherstone told me you were here, and free, my heart told me all the rest. I knew there was no mistake; you were as inseparably bound to me as I have been to you.

“Now, Katherine, you shall not leave this enchanted garden until you name the day you will become my wife! Soon—soon—I hope. We have suffered long enough. These two last years of heart-break must have no more added to their dismal length.”

She clings closer to him, as she answers: “Will you let me tell you something, and promise not to think me cruel for alluding to your great misfortune to-night?”

“Of course I will, dearest, though I don’t know what you mean by ‘alluding to my misfortune.’ I am the most fortunate, the happiest man in the world to-night.”

“Well, it is only this. I longed earnestly to go to you when I heard you were blind. I grieved more about that than even about the fear that you had ceased to love me. If possible, I

love you more, since your great loss. Affliction seems to draw us closer than the natural ties. Dear Barron, you shall not feel that loss as you have done. I will use my eyes for both."

He interrupted her, with a bright smile upon his handsome face; and turning so that the moon shone fully upon them, bade her look into his eyes.

Surely the eyes that met her own must see; for that tender, loving look of old is in them.

"Oh, Hartley!" is her joyful cry, "you are not blind—you are not blind. Tell me, quick!"

"Yes, dear, I can tell you truly, I am no more blind than you are, thank God!" he answers, reverently. "Do you think I would be selfish enough to ask you to join your bright young life to mine, if I were blind? What a noble heart you have, my queen—'tried and true.' You would have been loving enough to let it make no difference to you, I know; but I should never have asked you to make the sacrifice. Had I not recovered my sight, I should never have come here."

"Why did you not write and tell me of your good fortune, Hartley?"

‘Because, my love, I did not think Mrs. Frank Challoner would be interested in my affairs; and I have only been at home one week.’

“Your letter—it was in a strange hand. How did that happen?”

“It was not my writing; but I did not intend to deceive you. The physicians have forbidden me to read or write for one year; but I can see as well as you. That rose in your hair is very becoming,” he added, roguishly.

“Oh, Hartley! God has been good to us.”

“He is good to every one, my darling. His chastenings are sometimes hard to bear. I think I came as near doubting Divine mercy and goodness, as I ever did, when I thought I had lost you. Even my blindness did not cause me so much suffering. You see I do not speak extravagantly when I say that you are dearer to me than my eyes.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN CONCLUSION.

**"And who feels discord now, or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day."**

There is a wedding in the church at Linden Center. Katherine's robes are of the purest white; and instead of the old brown hood, with sad child-eyes looking out from its gloomy depths, a delicate wreath of orange-blossoms adorns the graceful head.

Helen hovers near, a tearful, guardian angel; and Lenore, the "first bride's-maid," is arranging the folds of a veil which "half reveals and half conceals" the bride's radiant beauty — draping her as with a white cloud.

In the parlor, a little group of relatives and friends are awaiting her appearance before going to the church.

Cousin Azariah, in a new black coat, bought expressly for the present occasion, and which is a

trifle too short in the waist and sleeves, is moralizing upon the changes that have taken place within three or four years. "Yes," says cousin Azariah, looking down and twirling his thumbs, "yes, it is a strange, changeable world, this. There is poor Alf Seymour dead and buried; Tom gettin' to be a great tall feller, and goin' to turn out one of the smartest lawyers in the State, some day, mark my words! Katherine goin' to be married to-night. Seems as though it was only a year or so ago since she was a baby, these children grow up so fast. Wall, wall, it's the way of the world — births, marriages, and funerals — dyin' and bein' born; marryin' and givin' in marriage. I hope Katherine is goin' to do well, and I guess she is. Law! he justs worships her, and she thinks there ain't another man in the world his ekel. I kinder thought when he come out here and worked so hard to save Tom, that he liked our Katherine. I always did say when them poor children were left with skersely a friend in the world — I always did say to Lucinda that somebody ought to help 'em along in the world."

"Yes," chimed in Mrs. Azariah, "Mr. Carr

and me always took a deep interest in Alfred Seymour's children; but who would have supposed they would turn out so well, brought up as they were, without Sunday-school privileges, and with no one to teach them the gospel or catechism? But, Azariah, ain't it most time for us to be goin' up to the church? I hear the bride comin' down the stairs."

Edward Seymour has come West to be present at the marriage of Katherine, who he declares to be "a true Seymour," and presents her with a volume of the Family History. "That is the worst of it all," he says, smilingly, after the ceremony, "you can't keep your family name."

"Ah! but I have had so much trouble under the name of Seymour, Uncle Edward, that I am glad to change it, and see if the change will not bring me good fortune," is her answer.

"If it does not bring you happiness it shall not be my fault," whispers Barron; and her happy face grows still brighter at his words.

So these two are wed. I think their future is one of promise. It has been no light fancy which has drawn them together.

Barron has waited so long for his happiness,

he concludes to give himself a holiday. Their bridal trip will be to Europe. Katherine's eyes will feast then upon the art treasures of the old world; and her "impractical" nature drink deep at the fountain aunt Seymour so despiseth.

"And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold;
And far across the hills they went,
In that new world which is the old.
And o'er the hills, and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,—
Beyond the night, across the day,
Through all the world she followed him."

I have learned to love them both so well, that I am loth to leave them; but they do not need me longer; for the happiest people, like the most prosperous countries, have no history.

Katherine finds in her husband's devotion ample compensation for her past pains and sorrows. The dark clouds are left behind; she looks forward, and beholds

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